
ENQA AGENCY REVIEW: NATIONAL CENTRE OF PUBLIC ACCREDITATION (NCPA)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report results from an external review assessing the compliance of the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA) against the 2015 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). It is the second review of NCPA and it should be recognised that in 2015 the ESG were updated, potentially requiring agencies to adjust some of their processes. NCPA is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and also listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). NCPA offers public accreditation to higher education institutions (HEI) and is one of 105 organizations offering such service currently listed in the Russian Federation (RF). In the RF public accreditation is a voluntary activity for HEIs that happens independently from state accreditation. NCPA operates on a national level with some international procedures as part of cooperations with other agencies. This external review report is based on the review process that primarily used NCPA's self-assessment report, a site visit of the ENQA appointed review panel to Moscow and Yoschkar Ola, and published information available on NCPA's website.

Recognizing the changes in the HE system of the Russian Federation as well as structural changes in the federal administration and ministries NCPA succeeds to keep a relatively stable service-level of an independent non-state agency who has to compete at the free market. NCPA is not funded from the state and charges the fees for its services directly to institutions.

Considering the written documentation and the numerous evidences reviewed by the panel of experts, but also referring to the numerous stakeholder interviews and impressions while talking to NCPA staff, the panel underlines that NCPA is a well-established and reputable institution in the HE system of the RF. Besides offering accreditation services that have a clear enhancement orientation NCPA also aims at the promotion of a quality culture in the Russian HE system. To the positive impression of the panel internationalization is an inherent part not only of NCPAs procedures, but also in its strategic development. The broadly practiced use of international experts is only one indicator supporting this impression.

In light of repeated changes of the legal context of its operations, NCPA successfully manages to maintain good relations with the relevant stakeholders and implements its procedures much in light of enhancement orientation, which is in line with the function of public accreditation in the RF. At the same time NCPA manages to navigate the challenges of the market and deal with fluctuations in the demand of its services.

The panel wants to underline that in many cases, while assessing NCPA against the ESGs, the panel was able to understand why certain shortcomings might exist due to operational requirements of competition or for historical reasons; however, the panel believes that in light of a practiced quality culture it is important to transparently assess NCPA in order to allow the organization further enhancement. Recognizing the strong orientation of NCPA towards the ESG in its design of the accreditation standards, particularly the implementation of cluster accreditations and making the assessment reports more comprehensible will require further development of the agency.

The panel found NCPA's level of alignment with the ESG is the following:

- Fully compliant for the following ESGs – 3.2; 3.5; 3.7 and 2.1

- Substantially compliant in the following ESGs – 3.1; 3.3; 3.4; 3.6; 2.3; 2.4; 2.5 and 2.7
- Partially compliant: 2.2 and 2.6

In light of the impression of a well established and accepted actor in the RF HE system, the panel hopes that its analyses and recommendations will support NCPA in its continued efforts to enhance their procedures and thus the quality of the Russian HE system.

INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the compliance of the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA) with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. It is based on an external review conducted from May 2018 to June 2019.

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

ENQA's regulations require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they act in substantial compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015.

As this is NCPA's second review, the panel is expected to provide clear evidence of results in all areas and to acknowledge progress from the previous review. The panel has adopted a developmental approach, as the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* aim at constant enhancement of the agencies.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2014 REVIEW

In its 2014 report, the panel concluded that the National Centre for Public Accreditation is in substantial compliance with the ENQA Membership provisions. The panel therefore recommended to the Board of ENQA that NCPA should have its membership in ENQA confirmed for a further period of five years. The same report was the basis for listing NCPA in EQAR.

The 2014 report recognised NCPA as a young and dynamic agency that is well supported by the stakeholders and that features a strong orientation towards the ESG while developing their policies. The detailed findings of the review, that followed the then relevant review methodology were as follows:

- **ESG 2.1 (Use of internal quality assurance procedures): full compliance**
- **ESG 2.2 (Development of external quality assurance processes): full compliance**
- **ESG 2.3 (Criteria for decisions): substantial compliance**
 - Clarify the procedure and criteria for granting limited accreditation (1, 2 or 3 years)
 - Provide feedback on the accreditation decision to the expert panels
 - Publish the accreditation decision on the website
- **ESG 2.4 (Processes fit for purpose): full compliance**
 - Improve the briefing of experts before the site visit (especially for the student members and members of labor market).
- **ESG 2.5 (Reporting): full compliance**
- **ESG 2.6 (Follow-up procedures): substantial compliance**
 - Design clearer follow-up procedures.
 - Regulate follow-up procedures in the evaluation contract signed with the university.
 - Set up a process to encourage follow-up demands
 - Provide feedback on the accreditation procedures to the evaluated universities
- **ESG 2.7 (Periodic reviews): substantial compliance**
 - Increase the impact of external evaluation results in order to encourage universities to be re-evaluated.
- **ESG 2.8 (System-wide analyses): full compliance**
- **ENQA criterion 2 / ESG 3.2: Official status: full compliance**
- **ENQA criterion 3 / ESG 3.4: Resources: full compliance**
- **ENQA criterion 4 / ESG 3.5: Mission statement: full compliance**

- **ENQA criterion 5 / ESG 3.6: Independence: full compliance**
 - Formalise the independence of the NAB in a 'code of ethics'
 - Provide more transparency in the selection of National Accreditation Board members
- **ENQA Criterion 6 / ESG 3.7: External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies: full compliance**
 - Establish an independent Appeals Committee
- **ENQA Criterion 7 / ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures: full compliance**
- **ENQA criterion 8: Consistency of judgements, appeals system and contribution to ENQA aims: full compliance**

REVIEW PROCESS

The 2019 external review of NCPA was conducted in line with the process described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the external review of NCPA was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

- Nora Skaburskiene (Chair) Director of Studies, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, former Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) (ENQA nominee);
- Ronny Heintze (Secretary), Commissioner for International Affairs, Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes (AQAS), Germany (ENQA nominee);
- Tatjana Volkova, Professor, BA School of Business and Finance, Latvia (EUA nominee);
- Francisco Joaquín Jiménez González, Student, Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena, Spain (ESU nominee).

Goran Dakovic coordinated the review on behalf of the ENQA Secretariat. The panel is thankful to the support delivered by Goran Dakovic, allowing the panel to process the review in a well-structured way.

The review followed the generally practiced sequence of the agency producing a self-assessment report (SAR) that is then reviewed by a nominated panel of international experts who use a site visit to interview the relevant stakeholders during the site-visit. The interviews aim at clarifying and gathering additional evidence. Based on the SAR, the information gathered during the interviews as well as considering additionally presented information, the panel has produced the following review report.

Self-assessment report

NCPA started the self-evaluation process in May 2018 with the decision to initiate the external review procedure. In the next months an action plan for the preparation of the SAR was implemented and first internal and external feedback for the SAR was collected. In order to prepare the SAR a special working group headed by NCPA Director and Deputy Director was appointed and the agency developed a road map, which specified the responsibilities of each member of the working group. As part of the procedure a survey of stakeholders was conducted. The survey aimed at receiving feedback from the representatives of professional associations and organizations, members of the students' unions, members of the National Accreditation Board and others about their opinion on NCPA's activities and its contribution to the quality assurance of higher education. After weekly meetings of the working group the SAR was approved at the NCPA's general meeting on 12 December 2018 and translated into English language.

Site visit

The site visit took place in Moscow and Jochkar Ola from 11 to 14 March 2019. Due to the logistical requirement to visit two cities in three days the panel intensively used online preparation and exchanged about issues requiring further clarification. The first day started in Moscow and served for an internal meeting of the panel to discuss and agree on issues that required further discussion in person and clarification during the interviews. An important part of this preparation was also the meeting with the agency's resource person to clarify on broader questions helping the panel to understand the system NCPA works in as well as relevant background information regarding changes in Russian legislation as well as the HE system.

Starting on 12 March, there were 13 meetings with different stakeholders with relevance to the activities of NCPA. These meetings included meetings with the:

- Director and Vice Director of NCPA,
- Team responsible for drafting the SAR,
- Agency staff,
- Representatives of public authorities in the sphere of education,
- Members of the National Accreditation Board,
- representatives from the reviewers' pool (academic experts, representatives of professional community),
- Representatives of student community,
- Quality coordinators of reviewed HEIs,
- Management of HEIs evaluated by NCPA
- members of the General Meeting of the Founders of NCPA,
- foreign experts,
- representatives of foreign agencies (joint projects).

In the last meeting of the site visit, the Panel had a session with most NCPA staff present at that day to share the preliminary conclusions related to the level of compliance of NCPA with the ESG. The review panel confirms that it received access to all documents and people it wished to consult throughout the review.

A full list of meetings including the names of interviewees can be found in Annex 1 to this report.

It can be mentioned that the atmosphere of the interviews was constructive and that NCPA supported the success of the site visit not only by an exemplary logistic, but also by creating a positive atmosphere. Some members of the groups interviewed by the panel required translation from English to Russian and vice versa. Hence, in most interviews consecutive translation was used. The panel was aware of this procedure in advance and the timelines were planned accordingly. The interpreter was independent and ENQA agreed before the site visit took place. The panel recognises the important role of the interpreter for the efficient progress of the site visit and also recognises the conceptual impact of the use of a different language in order to explain different procedures and systems.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF THE AGENCY

HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are three kinds of HEIs in the Russian Federation: academies, institutes and universities. The type of HEI is determined by the respective founder/responsible authority. An institute is a higher education institution which offers educational programmes of undergraduate education (mostly bachelor's programmes) in a specific field of studies. An academy is a higher education institution, which offers educational programmes of undergraduate and graduate education and conducts fundamental and applied research mainly into one of the spheres of science and culture (for example, Agricultural Academy, Medical Academy, Economics Academy, Music Academy).

The name of university is for a higher education institution that offers educational programmes of undergraduate and graduate education according to the wide range of fields of studies and carries out fundamental and applied research into a wide range of sciences. In the Russian Federation universities are categorised into federal and national research universities. The status of these HEIs is determined by the Russian Federation Government. 29 HEIs were assigned this status. Federal Universities train highly professional personnel and carry out research aimed at regional development in line with the requirements of World Class Universities. While national research universities train highly professional personnel and carry out research into priority areas in line with the requirements of World Class Universities.

In the last four years the number of HEIs has considerably decreased, partly as a consequence of the measures of state control, supervision and monitoring by Rosobrnadzor (see below). While in 2014 there were 968 institutions with a total of 1356 branches in 2017 there were only 769 left with 692 branches.

In May 2018 the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation was reorganised and two independent bodies were formed: the Ministry of Public Education with the responsibility for preschool and secondary school education, and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation. As explained by NCPA at the time of the external review the Ministries are developing their structures, functions and staff composition.

By Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of July 2018 the Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science (Rosobrnadzor) was separated from the Ministry of Education and is now an independent state body of executive power. Rosobrnadzor is now subordinated directly to the Government of the Russian Federation.

Rosobrnadzor carries out the obligatory state accreditation of study programmes for compliance with the Federal State Educational Standards. Rosobrnadzor functions as a federal body for control over the performance and quality of programmes delivered by educational institutions. It also supervises the regional education authorities, licensing in the sphere of education and recognition of foreign documents of education.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Russian legislation identifies state and public and professional-public accreditation. State accreditation confirms the compliance of the educational process with the Federal State Educational Standards. State accreditation is a mandatory procedure conducted by Rosobrnadzor and its subordinate organization the National Accreditation Agency (NAA). As a result of successful state accreditation, the HEI is awarded a certificate of state accreditation for a period of six years. In case

of non-compliance with the Federal State Educational Standards, Rosobrnadzor issues an ordinance or orders an unscheduled inspection, suspends or withdraws accreditation.

Public as well as professional-public accreditation is a voluntary and independent procedure. It can be conducted by Russian, foreign and international organizations. It can use national (e.g. occupational standards) and international standards.

NCPA provides accreditation services to higher education institutions and institutions of further professional education and carries out programme accreditation of study programmes delivered by higher education institutions against ten NCPA developed standards, the requirements of occupational standards and the labour market and in line with the Federal State Educational Standards. NCPA also offers programme accreditation of study programmes delivered by further education institutions against seven standards developed by NCPA in compliance with ESG, the requirements of occupational standards and the labour market, in line with national regulations for this sector. Institutional accreditation of further educational institutions against is also offered by NCPA.

The outcomes of public accreditation are taken into account in state accreditation procedures as well as in monitoring and supervision procedures of the state and in distributing admission quotas. NCPA also underlines that the outcomes of public accreditation may also be relevant for promoting the image of a HEI internationally, thus facilitating the cooperation between HEIs at the national and international levels.

Hence it is important to underline that NCPAs activities in EQA are voluntary for institutions and public accreditation is viewed by HEIs as a mechanism of educational quality management. Nence NCPA's work is enhancement oriented. An automated information monitoring system of public accreditation of study programmes is in place in the Russian Federation. As of 31 October 2018, there are 105 accreditation bodies registered in the system, NCPA being one of them.

NCPA

NCPA in its current form was founded in December of 2009 on the initiative of organizations working in the field of quality assurance and mass communications. Some of today's staff members also have experience in NCPA's predecessor (National Accreditation Agency, NAA) that started its history already in 1995 as Russia's first state accreditation agency. Changes in legislation and also recommendations of the an ENQA external review of NAA in 2008 led to a new structure and the formation of NCPA as an autonomous non-profit organization.

Based on NCPA's presentation in the SAR its mission involves improving quality of education, forming the culture of quality in educational institutions, promoting the image of Russian education nationally and internationally by offering public accreditation of educational programmes in compliance with European standards with due account of Russian legislation and traditions of Russian higher education.

In 2017 NCPA was included in the list of public accreditation bodies compiled by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (<http://accredpoa.ru>).

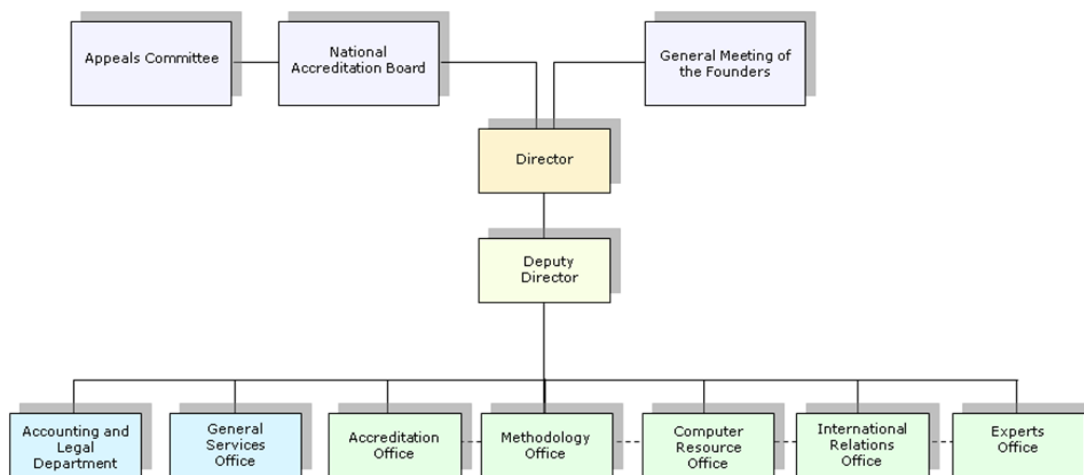
NCPA'S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE

NCPA's highest managing body is the General Meeting of the Founders of the Organization. The key responsibility of the General Meeting is to assure that the Organization pursues the goals it was established to achieve. While not being actively involved in the procedural decision making, this General Meeting of Founders elects a collegiate body – the National Accreditation Board (NAB) for the decision-making in all procedures.

The National Accreditation Board is made up of 20 - 30 representatives of the academic community, students, Mass Media, employers and quality assurance bodies and associations (including international ones).

To ensure objectivity of the decision-making of accreditation procedures an Appeals Committee of three members is in place. Members of the Appeals Committee are elected by simple majority of votes of the members of the NCPA's founders. The Appeals Committee is formed of independent persons, who are not members of the National Accreditation Board and are not employed by NCPA.

The governing structure of NCPA is represented by the following organizational chart:



The operational management of NCPA is done by its Director and Deputy Director. The Director is appointed by the General Meeting of NCPA's founders.

The organizational structure is made up of the following seven departments:

- **Accreditation Office** is responsible for support of accreditation procedures, preparation of analytical materials, summary reports and other presentation documents for the use by the National Accreditation Board for decision-making.
- **Methodology Office** is responsible for development of instructive and methodological materials on public accreditation.
- **Computer Resource Office** develops software for accreditation of educational institutions and maintains NCPA's websites; develops a unified automatic information system of the data base management of NCPA (CRM NCPA)
- **International Relations Office** is responsible for the cooperation with international networks for quality assurance, the selection and support of international experts and translation.
- **Experts Office** is responsible for selection and training of experts for expert panels.

- **Accounting and Legal Department** forms and executes accounting policy in accordance with accountancy legislation, drafts agreements with experts and educational institutions, prepares documents for tenders.
- **General Services Office** is responsible for general paperwork; logistics, provision of material and technical resources.

NCPA'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES

As explained by NCPA its activities are the following (first three relevant for ENQA review):

- Accrediting educational programmes of HEIs in alignment with ESG;
- Accrediting institutions of further education;
- Accrediting programmes of further education;
- Project work;
- Raising public awareness of the quality of study programmes.

NCPA offers quality assurance activities on the programme and institutional level including joint accreditation procedures of study programmes with foreign QA agencies and associations.

In the years 2014-2018 485 study programmes from 45 educational institutions were accredited, including 372 higher education programmes, 48 further education programmes, 61 postgraduate programmes and 4 vocational education programmes. Since 2016 NCPA has started accrediting study programmes of foreign HEIs.

NCPA describes that all their procedures follow - with insignificant adaptations - the same seven steps. These are:

- Step 1. Application: An educational institution applies to NCPA for public accreditation of (a) study programme(s). The application is considered by the Directorate for one week and the agreement on the procedure is developed. |
- Step 2. Self-evaluation of study programmes: The institution is granted access to the automated-support-system and organises and conducts self-evaluation of the study programmes to be accredited for compliance with the NCPA's standards.
- Step 3. External evaluation of study programmes: an external review panel analyses the material and a site visit to an educational institution takes place before the final report on the outcomes of the review is drafted.
- Step 4. Making an accreditation decision: Based on the analysis of the documents and the data provided by the HEI, the SER and the final report NCPA prepares a summary report, publishes it on its website in Russian and English and submits it to the NAB that takes a decision. The NAB can decide to accredit for a full term (6 years), to accredit for a reduced term (4 or 2 years), or to deny accreditation.
- Step 5. Appeals: In case of a breach of the accreditation procedure the HEI can appeal the accreditation decision (denial of accreditation), or appeal the duration and conditions of accreditation to the independent Appeals Committee. The appeals procedure is included in the agreement with the HEI.
- Step 6. Follow-up: In case of a reduced term of Accreditation (less than 6 years) the HEI has to submit a plan of actions (road map) addressing the recommendations of the external review panel and the NAB within 60 days after the decision. If the roadmap is agreed upon, the HEI can implement the actions and submit a report on corrective actions, in which case the NAB can decide to extend the accreditation period for up to two years. In case of a full-term

accreditation (6 years) the HEI has to submit to NCPA a plan on improvement of the study programme.

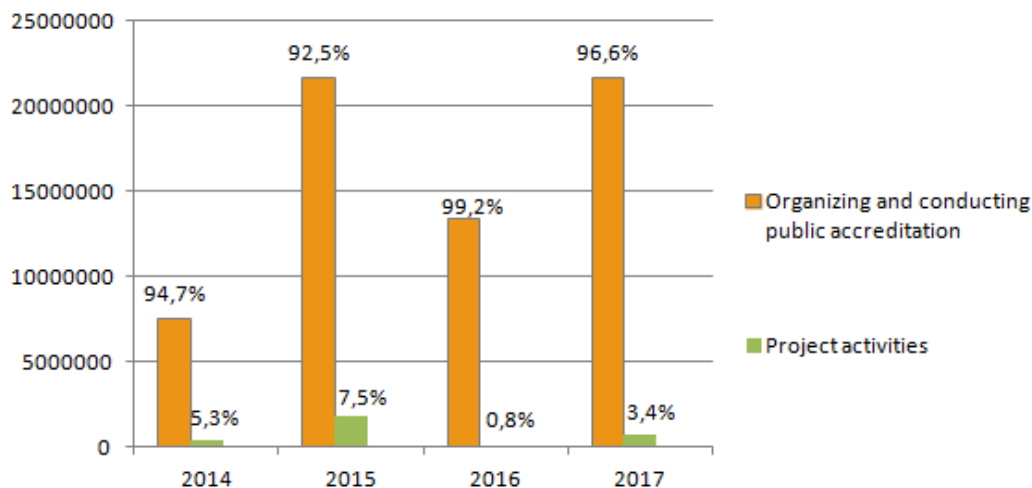
- Step 7: The use of accreditation results: The HEI has a right to publish information about its public accreditation including the logo of NCPA on its website and in other relevant material.

When conducting public accreditation of study programmes jointly with a foreign QA agency there is a procedure of aligning NCPA's standards and terms of reference with those of the partner-agency (duration of site visit, number of meetings, mutual obligations, order and procedure of external evaluation, etc).

NCPA'S FUNDING

NCPA is independent from the state and receives no budgetary support from the government. Hence it is financed through different sources. The major source is accreditation fees paid by HEIs undergoing accreditation and project activities (for example, participation in the TEMPUS IV ALIGN project). The fee for each accreditation procedure is calculated individually and part of the agreement between NCPA and the institution.

NCPA explains that significant income differences are caused by different numbers of accreditation procedures per year as public administration is a voluntary practice making the demand hard to control. The following chart shows NCPAs budget in the past four years (million rubles):



FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF NCPA WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG)

ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

2014 review recommendation: Define the boundaries of consultancy and set up regulations allowing to separate clearly public accreditation and consultancy.

Evidence

NCPA was established in 2009 on the initiative of the organizations working in the field of quality assurance and mass communication. NCPA overall aims are defined in the Statute (SAR, Annex 1). As its core activities, it conducts accreditation of educational programmes of higher education institutions, accreditation of institutions of further education and their programmes of further education based on procedures and standards defined by the Agency. Additionally, as part of its statutory task, NCPA undertakes research activities in the area of Social sciences and the Humanities, as well as Natural and Technical sciences (SAR, Annex 1).

In its mission statement, NCPA aims to improve quality of education, form the culture of quality in HEIs, promote the image of Russian education nationally and internationally by way of undertaking public accreditation of educational programmes in compliance with European standards of quality assurance using the European four-stage model with due account of Russian legislation and traditions of Russian higher education. The mission and vision are published on the website and they are also fully understood and actively supported by the many groups of stakeholders met by the review panel during the site visit. NCPA's Strategic Plan as well as an Action Plan have been developed by the Management of the Agency, presented and discussed with the NCPA's staff members, the members of the Accreditation Board and founders (SAR, p.39). NCPA's Strategic plan for 2017-2022 is attached as an annex 6 of SAR, while is not publicly available on the website. The strategic plan defines NCPA's mission, vision, intended goals and objectives as well as strategic areas of its development.

The Strategy is implemented through the 2018-2019 Plan of action that was available to the review team (SAR, Annex 3) while it is not published on the NCPA website.

The strategic plan was approved by the General meeting of the Founders. During the interview the Founders confirmed that discussions took place and they agreed with the directions of the Agency's development for the next five years.

Additionally, NCPA has presented the list of Key Performance Indicators (KPI). It should be noted that the plan presents KPIs for the previous years starting from 2014 and the data of their implementation, as well as KPIs for upcoming 2019 year. At the same time the panel recognizes that the KPIs is not a

part of strategic planning, and there are no KPI's developed for the Strategic plan 2017-2022. An Alignment of KPIs with strategic objectives of NCPA's development is not yet in place.

Currently, External Quality Assurance (EQA) is NCPA's core activity. General information on its main activities and detailed internal regulations on its EQA processes are available on its website. Between 2014 and 2018, NCPA conducted in total 485 accreditation procedures (SAR; Annex 2). The number of reviews per year varied from 119 in 2014 to 54 in 2015 and 84 in 2018. NCPA implemented pilot accreditations of further education programmes and 1 pilot project for accreditation of further education institutions. Together with foreign quality assurance agencies NCPA carried out joint accreditation procedures of 14 study programmes (with 2 agencies from Germany and 1 from Taiwan) and 9 clusters of programmes (with an agency from China) (SAR, p. 10).

The key stakeholders of NCPA are HEIs, experts involved in accreditation processes, students and student bodies, employers, bodies for public evaluation of education, Accreditation Board members (SAR, p.38). Stakeholders are involved in the governance and work of the NCPA through their membership of General meeting of the Founders and National Accreditation board, through involvement into the processes of accreditation as experts, through participation in surveys, seminars, webinars and face-to-face meetings (SAR, p.15). The results of the surveys are taken into consideration in order to improve QA procedures. Stakeholders (for example, representatives of the Russian Student Union, Union of Architects of Russia, and others) were involved in the process of revision of the standards of accreditation (SAR, p. 31).

Analysis

Referring to 2014 review recommendation "to define boundaries of consultancy and set up regulations allowing to separate clearly public accreditation and consultancy" NCPA provided further explanation in the Follow-up report of 2016 and also during the discussions with the panel. It became obvious to the panel that NCPA provides consultations only on practical arrangements and logistical issues of organizing the procedure of public accreditation. NCPA publishes Guidelines for self-evaluation of study programmes, further professional education and institutions of further professional education, but these documents are targeted to help institutions in preparing self-evaluation reports for external accreditation. Still the Statute of NCPA lists the following activity: "On request of education institutions provides advisory services and audit of educational quality" (SAR., p.48). During the visit and the interviews with the Founders, Management of the Agency, representatives of HEIs, students it was obvious that NCPA does not realise in practice the activity indicated in Statute regarding consultancy services (beyond the specific support regarding their procedures). NCPA organises seminars, webinars, conferences for a wide range of stakeholders on more general topics of higher education - Bologna process and its tools, ESG, development of quality assurance systems in different regions, etc. In so far, the concern regarding boundaries to consultancy services is more a future oriented suggestion, if in the future NCPA would decide to widen its activities (as explained in some interviews) and step into advisory services, it should very clearly declare the boundaries of consultancy.

Based on the information provided in SAR and gathered during the visit the panel confirms that NCPA is engaged in regular EQA activities in accordance with predefined standards and procedures that are published on the website of the Agency. Though the number of accreditation procedures has varied quite significantly over the years, (as public accreditation is voluntary and depends on the applications of HEIs) EQA is the main activity of NCPA.

The panel also confirms that NCPA's mission statement together with the objectives of the Agency are published on its website as well as in the strategic plan.

As reflected together with NCPA management the Agency could take into account the mismatch of different versions of the mission statement provided in the Strategic plan and on the webpage as well as different wordings in English and Russian versions. While differences due to translation should not be overemphasised, the fact that one of NCPA strengths is its international orientation and cooperation, puts special attention to the need for consistency between the different language versions.

Further, NCPA pays a lot attention to internationalisation of its work. It conducts joint evaluation procedures together with foreign QAAs and associations, actively participates in international projects and research activities, international conferences, seminars, internships in partner agencies, involves foreign experts in accreditation procedures. This focus is also confirmed by the opinion of the stakeholders (SAR, p.70-74 and interviews). The panel recognises that this strategically important international approach is not evident in the mission statement of the Agency as well in the key areas of development on its strategic plan.

Considering the strategic plan as well as the action plan that were available for the panel to review it should be mentioned that these are non-published documents. While the panel acknowledges that the documents are discussed in the process of being agreed upon, it does not seem to be intended to inform stakeholders about what NCPA seeks to achieve in a sustainable way. The Strategic plan has clear objectives. However, some of its objectives are hardly measurable (e.g. promoting joint international accreditation of study programmes with foreign partners and promoting the image of NCPA). There are no milestones and the target indicators defined in the Strategy and plan of activities. The separate list of KPIs contains indicators only for the coming year (2019), but not for the whole planned period (2017-2022). Therefore, it can be concluded that NCPA does not have in place a clear mechanism for reviewing the progress in the implementation of the Strategy that would make sure the mission translates well in the daily work of the agency. While the panel could clearly see that the daily work of the agency is in line with its overall strategy, the strategic monitoring of this achievement remains rather vague.

The Statute does not explicitly assign responsibilities for approving and implementing the Strategy to any of the governing bodies. Thus, there is no body to which the Director is accountable in this respect. Further, in the meetings with the Founders, the Management and staff, the panel did not find evidence that clear mechanisms are in place for translating the objectives of the Strategic plan into daily work of the agency, and for monitoring progress towards achieving them.

The panel greatly supports the results and findings in NCPA SWOT analysis, where the agency identifies several important threats that may impact future activities of the Agency: unstable state education policy, the right to conduct professional-public accreditation could be delegated by law to employer associations, increasing number of organizations conducting external evaluation procedures (SAR, p. 43). However, the Strategic plan for 2017-2022 does not identify any risks or activities that should be taken in case the changes happen. The panel does not have a clear view on how NCPA will address new key challenges in case of the changes of Law or decline/increase of the numbers of requests by HEIs for external procedures. Even when recognizing the challenges of a public accreditor in a surrounding that is hard to plan, the panel believes the NCPA would benefit from a clearer structure of its strategic development and consequently strategy implementation.

The evidences collected indicate that there is a strong focus in NCPA on its EQA-related and research activities and little consideration is given to institutional planning and management.

It is evident to the panel that representatives of the academic community, including both academic staff and students, and employers are extensively involved both in NCPA's governance and in its EQA processes.

There is a room for further positioning NCPA as "... a centre of innovation in the sphere of quality assurance by way of participating in programmes and projects on quality evaluation". The panel agrees that NCPA shares information and its own experience of evaluation procedures by presenting at international QA forums, conferences and seminars. NCPA's international cooperation is a dynamic field with a potential for further development and yet there is little evidence in communication of latest innovations delivered by NCPA. Hence the panel further encourages NCPA to participate in projects and programmes of quality evaluation.

Panel commendations

NCPA is commended for involvement of stakeholders into the governance and activities of the Agency. Stakeholders highly value involvement of students into accreditation processes.

Panel recommendations

The Panel recommends:

that NCPA amends its Statute to explicitly assign the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of its strategy to the General meeting of Founders;

to involve a mechanism of risk identification into NCPAs strategic planning;

to revise NCPAs mission statement that it clearly defines the full range of its activities.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

If in the future NCPA would decide to widen its activities and step into advisory services, it would be beneficial to very clearly declare the boundaries of consultancy. NCPA will have to ensure that all processes are documented, published and lead to clear separation of public professional accreditation and the consultancy services.

As reflected together with NCPA management the agency could take into account the mismatch of different versions of the mission statement provided in the Strategic plan and on the webpage as well as different wordings in English and Russian versions.

During the annual planning process of NCPA, the strategic plan could be used as the basis for developing annual activity plan which should align with the indicators.

To strengthen positioning NCPA as a centre of innovation in the sphere of quality assurance by way of participating in programmes and projects on quality evaluation.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS

Standard:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

Evidence

The SAR outlines that NCPA is an autonomous non-profit organization, which has an official status in the Russian Federation and is recognised by the competent state and public bodies. Changes in the legislation of the Russian Federation in the past five years did not touch the fundament of the recognition of NCPA by the authorities as required adjustment in its statutes were processed accordingly. Furthermore, the SAR outlines that NCPA is a legal entity and has an independent balance sheet, also explaining that it is financially independent from the government.

Beyond the information provided by NCPA evidence for its status can also be found in the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of 11.04.2017 No. 431 "Forming and Keeping the List of Organizations Implementing Public Accreditation of the Basic Professional Study Programmes, Basic Programmes of Professional Training and (or) Further Education Programmes" and the list of national accreditation bodies published online at <http://accredpoa.ru>.

Analysis

The panel carefully reviewed the information provided by NCPA, particularly considering the Federal Law of the Russian Federation of December 12, 2012 No. 273 "On Education in the Russian Federation" as well as the list of recognised accreditation bodies. Further considering the different MoU signed by NCPA with e.g. Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Department of Health of Primorsky Kray; or regional, national and international professional associations of employers, the panel found the provided information consistent and supportive to conclude that NCPA operates on a well-established legal basis and is recognised not only by the relevant public authorities but also by the private sector.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

Standard:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

2014 review recommendation:

NCPA should formalise, in a „Code of ethics“, the independence of the National Accreditation Board from higher education institutions or other stakeholders.

Evidence

The SAR explains that NCPA is an independent non-profit organization, which bears autonomous responsibility for its actions in the sphere of quality assurance of education. Through its statutes, and decrees regulating public accreditation procedures of study programmes and HEIs of the Russian Federation organizational independence shall be safeguarded. Beyond this NCPA has also established a "Code of Ethics for Members of the National Accreditation Board" that also explains their role as not acting on behalf of the organization they represent.

The presented Regulations on Public Accreditation outline the lines of operational independence by explaining the process of nomination and appointment of external experts, that are undertaken

independently from third parties, such as HEIs, governments and other stakeholders. In this light the SAR concludes that NCPA bears full responsibility for its evaluation processes and the development of methods and procedures creating operational independence.

Considering the level of independence of the outcomes NCPA explains that it is responsible for the final outcomes of the QA processes. In a defined process the HEI is consulted with regard to removal of any possible factual errors in the Final Report. However, neither the HEI, nor any other stakeholders can influence the findings and conclusions of the External Review Panel. The decision on public accreditation is then made by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) on the basis of the Final Report of the Review Panel and analytical materials (Summary Reports) that are prepared by NCPA staff.

Membership in the NAB is officially decided by the General Meeting of the Founders, while discussions with the NAB showed that they are also involved in the discussions about new members to the body. As confirmed during the discussions on site NCPA Director as well as Deputy Director are also voting members in the NAB.

Analysis

The panel carefully analysed the different layers of independency required to fulfil the standards and also focussed on the outcomes of the 2014 review. Without doubt the provided evidence supports NCPA independence from state and governmental actors. Statutes as well as Regulations for public accreditation clearly set boundaries and regulate the role of NCPA independent from governmental influence on the outcomes of their activities.

A second layer of independence that gained the special attention of the panel was organizational, as well as operational independence of the National Accreditation Board. This issue was highlighted in the last review and NCPA took different actions to increase transparency in the selection process as well as establishing a code of ethics for the Members of the National Accreditation Board. At this point the priority clearly has to be the independence from 3rd party – stakeholder influence on the operations and decisions of the NAB. The described way of implementation of the selection of the NAB was discussed amongst the panel members and the panel believes that the NAB generally can be seen as an independent decision-making body.

However, two technical reasons for concern still remain. Firstly, the panel recognised that the Director and Deputy director are also voting members in the NAB. Recognizing the high level of professionalism demonstrated by the individuals, on the structural level it is obvious that the main priority of the Director is the management and economic health of its organization. Providing the Director with direct influence on the accreditation decision structurally weakens the independence of the NAB. This gains particularly weight as the panel learned during the discussions that there were several cases in which the NAB discussed about the appropriate qualification of the review panel in light of unclear recommendations. Since it is the responsibility of the Director to set up the review panel, easily a potential conflict of interest can be identified. At the same time the panel underlines that there was no indication that this has led to conflicts in the past, however, structurally this mix of competencies makes the system vulnerable considering independence.

Furthermore, the panel received quite mixed information about the selection of the NAB and the terms of office of its members. While the regulations are clear on who appoints the NAB, there is no fixed terms of office as the regulations state that “One third of the Board members retire every five years and new members are elected.” During the interview members of NAB themselves had quite vague understandings about how the new members are appointed. Recognizing the central role of the NAB, the panel believes that clearer, more explicit and transparent regulations regarding the

members, stakeholder percentages, and terms of office will help further strengthening the independence of the NAB.

Thirdly, and not to be underestimated is NCPA independence from HEI influence. Recognizing that NCPA is a non-state actor and its accreditations are not compulsory in the Russian Federation, hence NCPA operations build on demand of HEI - it seems advisable to pay special attention to the independence of NCPA operations from HEI influence. The panel carefully reviewed the policies and code of ethics for the NAB, and reviewed reports as well as decisions taken by NCPA. Also the question of independence was critically reflected when discussing with HEIs as well as reviewers and the panel found no indication for concerns in this regard.

Panel recommendations

Limit membership to the NAB to people who are not involved at any other stage of the EQA procedure.

Define clearer, more explicit and transparent regulations regarding the members, stakeholder percentages, and terms of office of the NAB.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Standard:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

Evidence

NCPA considers thematic analysis to be one of its priorities. The agency issues a number of types of reports aimed at providing useful and interesting information to stakeholders, including potential students and employers. The SAR details a variety of types of reports, all of which are published on the agency website and therefore easily accessible. Since 2014 NCPA has produced a number of publications: 48 articles, two issues of conference proceedings, 11 guidance manuals (SAR, p. 22). Publications cover a wide range of topics: analysis of law enforcement practices in QA in Russia; analysis of legal framework and changes; analysis of NCPA's performance; presentation of content and structural changes in the system of education; presentation of accreditation procedures; international tendencies in QA systems.

The panel has asked and was presented with a separate list of 31 publications, that - based on NCPA position - were based on the information gained during evaluations. The provided publications aim to identify main trends in HE and QA development in Russia thus influencing the development of HE and QA systems in the country and promoting NCPA's achievements. As explained in the SAR as well as confirmed during interviews with the stakeholders NCPA presents findings from its publications at national and international events and uses feedback from participants to revise its standards and procedures.

The panel found that stakeholders have not requested any thematic studies on specific topics. Topics and contents of analyses are chosen by NCPA. There are regular research seminars (2-3 times a month) where the issues of thematic analysis in the sphere of quality assurance are discussed. (SAR, p.9)

Analysis

The panel has found evidence that publications are regularly produced both in English and in Russian. They provide an overview and analysis of the systems of higher education and quality assurance in Russia: assessment of learning outcomes, usage of monitoring by the Ministry of Education and Science, joint accreditation, different types of accreditation. Some articles present the overview of Russian higher education in the Bologna process as well as new developments in ENQA, CEENQA and APQN; results of ALIGN project. Thus, the panel agrees that they provide valuable inputs to evidence-based policies for higher education at national level. Clearly this is also in line with the perception and appreciation of HEIs as well as other stakeholders as NCPA is an active player in this field. There is, however, no analysis of areas of good practice and areas for improvement in terms of quality or IQA. A clear procedure for a thematic analysis as a structured process is not in place and no process on that issue is part of the Internal Quality system of NCPA. The processes for identifying and prioritising thematic analysis are unclear, this was concluded after discussions with the Director and the staff of the Agency as none of the groups were able to clearly describe how the topics were identified and selected.

One of the changes in the 2015 ESG is that this standard is intended to encourage agencies to use and disseminate findings of their external quality assurance activities through the analysis and publication of conclusions which result from the quality assurance procedures. Those reports should provide *“material for structured analyses across the higher education system. These findings can contribute to the reflection on and the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in institutional, national and international contexts. A thorough and careful analysis of this information will show developments, trends and areas of good practice or persistent difficulty.”* Although the panel values the broad range of publications NCPA is producing, the publications that are published on the website only broadly fit the rubric of Standard 3.4, or the accompanying Guidelines, in that they do not focus on analysing the findings of the accreditations that NCPA undertakes.

The interviews during the site visit with the Founders, Director, representatives of HEIs, students clearly showed that the concept of thematic analysis is not fully understood. Most of the people the panel has met understood that any publication published by NCPA would fall under the category of “thematic analysis”, be it a short information about the former accreditation procedure of a certain study programme and HEI or presentation of activities of QA networks (for example, Программы девяти вузов РФ получили международную аккредитацию, 22 января 2016, / Programmes of nine HEIs of Russian Federation received international accreditation, 22 January, 2016; Впервые китайский вуз получил аккредитацию в России, 27 января 2017 / For the first time HEI from China received accreditation in Russia, 27 January 2017; Мотивация к кооперации // Аккредитация в образовании, 2016. – № 4 (88). – С.30-31. / Motivation and cooperation // Accreditation in education, 2016).

Moreover, the panel is convinced that NCPA has the potential to expand activities in this area by adding valuable thematic analyses based upon the extensive data it gathers through its accreditation activities. In further enhancement of its activities NCPA may wish to consider conducting more tightly focused and systematic analyses of its accreditation reports (as required by the Standard). This could help the Agency to assess whether there are common themes of successes and weaknesses between institutions and that would highlight the opportunities for sharing good practice and bringing enhancements.

Panel commendations

The panel commends NCPA for regularly analysing the system of quality assurance in Russian Federation and for highlighting good practices of it as well as areas for improvement.

Panel recommendations

Focus on analysis of the material available in its accreditation reports and produce thematic analyses on this basis to support further development of quality assurance in higher education institutions by sharing good practice and bringing enhancements. This practice should also be included in the Internal Quality Assurance System.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

The plans of the follow-up activities presented by HEIs could serve as a valuable source of information for thematic analysis showing trends of the means used by HEIs to enhance their activities. This information would be valuable for all HEIs.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.5 RESOURCES

Standard:

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

2014 review recommendation

This standard was in the ESG-2005 part of Standard 3.4 Resources. In the 2014 ENQA-review the panel concluded 'fully compliant'. No recommendations were given.

Evidence

At the time of the review there were 31 persons working for NCPA: 16 full time and 15 part time personnel. Due to structural changes of the Agency the staff has been reduced by 10 people in comparison with 2013 and the balance between full time and part time employees has decreased (from 30 full timers and 11 part timers in 2013 to 16 full timers and 15 part timers in 2018) (SAR, p. 23). Among the staff members, 2 members have Doctoral and 4 - Candidate of Science Degrees. The NCPA SWOT analysis also highlights staff as one of the strengths of the organization: the management has 22 years of experience in the area of quality assurance and takes active part in policy making; NCPA staff is professional and has extensive experience in QA. Moreover, according to SAR (p. 9) four staff members have 20 years' experience and seven staff members in the field of quality assurance for more than seven years.

Based on information provided in the SAR and during the interviews NCPA staff can take various professional development opportunities: participate in NCPA's seminars, national and international events, ENQA seminars, research exchange visits, trainings for experts. The internal quality assurance system of NCPA foresees regular surveys of personnel's satisfaction. The results of the last survey of staff (2018) provided in SAR (p. 80) show a high level of commitment to the field of work and the organization.

NCPA is autonomous non-profit organisation, which does not receive financial support from the state. The Agency is funded primarily from fees paid by HEIs undergoing accreditation procedures (92% of income in 2015, 99% - in 2016 and 96% - in 2017). Small part of financing comes from the project

activities – for example, 7% in 2015. The budget varies from year to year due to different numbers of accreditation procedures (7,9 Million rubles in 2014, 23,4 Million rubles in 2015 and 13,5 Million rubles in 2016).

The agency has an office of 348,8 sq. metres located in Yoshkar-Ola, the Republic of Mary El, Russia. The premises comprise offices for staff, meeting rooms, an IT room. All working places are provided with equipment that is sufficient and appropriate for the organization's work. (SAR, p. 24; tour of facilities). The facilities are regularly updated, a new webinar room was equipped in 2018.

As described in the SAR and also discussed with NCPA staff all data collecting operations are processed automatically through the CRM system. NCPA also maintains a database of final reports produced by expert panels and accreditation decisions on the accredited study programmes.

Analysis

The review panel agrees that NCPA has well-trained, highly motivated and committed staff and good working relationships. The agency benefits from IT specialists' positions who are responsible for development and maintenance of an IT-based support system. It can also be stated that the management pays adequate attention to communication with staff. The workload of staff is regularly monitored by the Heads of Departments, the reduction of staff in 2016 is in line with the decline of applications for accreditation procedures. According to the Management's calculations that were presented during the interview, NCPA aims at an increase of procedures to 100 per year while currently the goal is 40 for 2019. These numbers could be addressed with available staff.

According to SAR (p. 25) current NCPA's resources are sufficient for the external quality assurance activities of the agency. The expert panel found no reason for doubt in this regard. As the statutes define that it is the responsibility of the General meeting of Founders to approve of the financial plan of the non-profit organization and making amendments to it, every year the Director of NCPA compiles and presents to the General Meeting of Founders an annual financial plan which is being discussed and approved. Beyond this process, the panel did not find any evidences for long-term financial planning, NCPA's 2017-2022 Strategic plan does not address financial aspects. During the meeting with the Founders and the Director the interviewees did not see a need in a financial plan for a longer period referring to the frequent changes of the environment. As the panel carefully interviewed the founders, as well as the director in this regard, in order to identify a potential risk due to limited income there was consistent reassurance that NCPA generates enough income from its activities to cover existing costs. In light of NCPA being an independent non-profit organization operating in a volatile and competitive market which makes it hard to project income/demand on a longer perspective, the panel concludes that NCPA deals well with the resource situation.

Beyond the requirements to meet the standard, the panel believes that financial planning would be an important tool for NCPA management as they also understand the need for increase of financial incomes in order to develop the Agency (SAR. p. 25: "*for the development of the agency it is necessary to increase the financial income from accreditation procedures.*"). The SWOT identifies several weaknesses concerning resources, but does not present any plan how to deal with the issues: for example, rigid pricing policy, financial dependence on the number of accreditation procedures, available technical and human resources do not allow to significantly increase the number of accreditation procedures, existing organizational structure precludes from effective implementation of grants and projects. All the weaknesses identified in SWOT were discussed during the interviews with the Founders, Management and staff. It appeared that the Management does not always take the weaknesses (highlighted in SWOT) as a threat to the activities of the Agency. For example, the

Management explained that they are quite flexible in fixing pricing of the services and this is negotiated with each institution under assessment. Also, the Agency is free to hire more staff whenever needed. This leads to a weakness identified by the panel in Standard 3.1 - lack of Strategic management by the leadership of the Agency, as the weaknesses and risks are not addressed thoroughly in the Strategic plan. (see 3.1)

In light of the particular situation of a non-state-funded agency, the panel has discussed the pricing policy with the management of the agency. NCPA makes a list of expenses of each procedure separately and negotiates the price of the procedure with the HEI. The total sum of expenses is agreed and fixed in an agreement. The agency does not have a fixed price list for different procedures and the price is negotiated for every procedure separately.

The panel confirms that the agency's premises are well-equipped and provide good working conditions for staff. According to the internal survey staff members, employees are highly satisfied with the technical equipment in their working places.

Panel commendations

The panel commends the Agency for its experienced and devoted staff. They all support the mission of NCPA and are involved in the process of continuous improvement of activities.

IT resources are admirable and help in making activities even more effective.

The panel commends NCPA for inclusion of all stakeholders in the Management of the Agency. This builds on the reputation of the Agency and is highly valued by the HEIs.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

NCPA could discuss how they would make use of better long-term planning in order to foresee necessary steps on how to increase financial incomes for development of the Agency.

Financial planning could become integral part of the overall process of strategic planning.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

2014 review recommendations

- Provide feedback on the accreditation decision to the expert panels
- Provide feedback on the accreditation procedures to the evaluated universities
- The Register Committee also noted that NCPA only published on its website the accreditation advice provided by the experts (p. 16), but not the final accreditation decisions taken by the National Accreditation Board.
- The Register Committee was unable to find the published guidelines for the external reviews of educational programmes, the guidelines for the self-evaluation of educational programmes and the guidelines for the preparation of a report on the results of corrective actions.
- Provide more transparency in the selection of the National Accreditation Board members

Evidence

As described in the SAR and accessible online NCPA's policy on internal quality assurance system is approved and published on the NCPA website. There is a Code of Ethics for experts and also for NCPA National Accreditation Board members that were both available for the review as these are published documents. Key aspects of the internal quality assurance are defined in a separate document called "Internal Quality Assurance System". It has four parts, which are 1) Management and functioning of the organization, 2) mechanisms of internal quality assurance of the key processes, 3) informational interaction, and 4) automatic support of NCPA public accreditation.

There is a public register of accredited programmes in NCPA's website; the agency also puts effort into publishing accredited programmes within DEQAR and the Register of Russian Ministry of Higher Education and Science.

As described in the SAR and confirmed during interviews with the experts NCPA provides feedback on accreditation decisions and the procedure to expert panels and evaluated universities. There is a process in place to process surveys sent and filled by expert panels as well as HEIs. Annex 4 of SAR shows the results of the surveys made to the experts and stakeholders.

The procedure of election of the National Accreditation Board members have been updated since the last review. Members can be nominated by HEIs related with NCPA. Candidates are considered elected when the majority of the participants of the General Meeting of the Founders voted favourably. There are established reasons for dismissal or resignation of NAB members before the ending of the term. The length of a term for NAB members is unclear, as it is not defined in the regulations for the National Accreditation Board.

Analysis

The panel of experts positively recognises that NCPA implements a multidimensional internal quality assurance system that covers a broad variety of processes relevant for EQA activities of the agency. These processes have a formal nature as they are combined in a policy document and their application happens regularly, depending on the nature of the QA activity. Evidences for this could be gathered by reviewing the results as well as during interviews with experts as well as HEI.

Although there is an internal quality assurance system published, approved and staff is aware of it, the panel recognised with surprise there are many inconsistencies through many documents: It is well possible to find the same document references at up to 3 different places with slightly different contents. These inconsistencies make procedures unclear, consequently affecting to overall internal quality assurance of the agency. For example, the mission statements on the website in Russian and English differs, as well as the strategic objectives available on the website of the Agency (in English) and the version published in the strategic plan of NCPA'S development for 2017-2022 are not aligned. These inconsistencies make the implementation of the defined internal quality assurance system unclear, consequently affecting activities and reputation of the agency.

On the other hand, the panel recognised that some important processes of internal quality assurance are not reflected in the internal quality system. E.g. there are processes to scrutinise experts reports before they are finally approved, which are vital to assure the quality of the report; while they are not documented as a standard procedure in the IAQ system. In order to enhance the internal quality assurance system, NCPA should be aware that internal quality processes encompass every activity and task taken within daily work and should fill-in the gaps in their IAQ system.

To take this one step further NCPA could - in its future development - consider taking a broader approach to their IQA system and include some important strategic elements in it. One example could be partnerships, as NCPA pays strategic attention to a number of partners connected with Memorandum of Understanding, but also the manifold publications could be included in the IQA in order to help the organization navigating in a more efficient way.

On another positive note it should be recognised that NCPA – in line with recommendations of the last review - has used the past years to improve feedback mechanisms to experts about the outcomes of accreditation procedures as well as to the evaluated institutions. In order to further improve these mechanisms – and based on the impressions gained during interviews with stakeholders and experts – NCPA might consider informing its stakeholders more directly about adjustments that were processed based on the collected feedback. Besides being appreciative it also demonstrates the impact of feedback by those affected by it.

Panel recommendations

Improve consistency of text in the documents available for internal and external use.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

NCPA could provide feedback on adjustments to this who provided the feedback leading to this adjustment.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

Standard:

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Evidence

This is the second ENQA-coordinated external review of NCPA. As a result of the first review in 2014, NCPA was granted full membership of ENQA in 2014. Based on the outcomes of the ENQA-coordinated review in 2014, and on its own evaluations, the EQAR Registration Committee approved inclusion of NCPA in the Register in 2015.

There is no requirement for external evaluation of the public professional accreditation agencies in Russian legislation. However, NCPA undertakes external evaluation coordinated by ENQA on its own initiative in order to enhance its own quality and ensure the transparency of its activities at the national and international levels. The NCPA's handbook for internal quality foresees that every five years NCPA applies to an external organization for external quality review.

The present review has been initiated by NCPA with a view to confirm its ENQA membership and renew its registration in EQAR.

Analysis

The panel confirms that NCPA undergoes periodic external reviews as recommended by this ESG. NCPA has taken into account recommendations of the 2014 review and presented follow-up report in 2016 with careful consideration of all remarks. The ENQA Board considered the follow-up report and

acknowledged the improvements made and expressed its satisfaction with the progress that has been achieved. NCPA’s internal documents also demonstrate commitment to translate ENQA’s standards into practice (Regulations and Guidelines) and it is evident to the panel from all its discussions during the visit that high priority is given by the agency to its ENQA membership. The panel clearly sees the orientation towards the ESG in all relevant procedures and – recognizing the high strategic priority – would even encourage NCPA to include this in its statutes.

With the participation of NCPA in two subsequent external reviews, the agency complies with the standard on the Cyclical External Review of Agencies.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

NCPA may consider amending its statutes with explicit provisions that NCPA is subject to an external ESG-based review every five years.

Panel conclusion: fully

ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

NCPA demonstrates understanding of a need to address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes. There are Regulations on public (international and joint) accreditation of study programmes (clusters of programmes) of higher, secondary and further professional education and NCPA’s standards and criteria approved at the meeting of the NAB on January 21, 2016.

NCPA has developed and approved standards and criteria for public accreditation of study programmes delivered by HEIs, as well as for study programmes delivered by further professional HEIs, and standards and criteria for public accreditation of further professional HEIs. The correlation of ESG part 1 and above mentioned NCPA’s standards is carried out and provided in SAR (SAR, p.27). The following table provided by NCPA explains the alignment of NCPA standards with ESG part 1.

ESG (Part 1)	NCPA’s Standards and criteria for public accreditation of study programmes delivered by HEIs	NCPA’s Standards and criteria for public accreditation of study programmes delivered by further professional education institutions	NCPA’s Standards and criteria for public accreditation of further professional education institutions
1.1. Policy for quality assurance.	Standard 1. Policy (mission, vision) and procedures for quality assurance.	Standard 1. Policy (goals, development strategy) of the education institution and the programme. Standard 6. Internal quality assurance	Standard 1. Policy (goals, development strategy) of the institution of further professional education. Standard 6. Internal QA system.

		system of the programme.	
1.2. Design and approval of programmes.	Standard 2. Design and approval of programmes.	Standard 1. Policy (goals, development strategy) of the education institution and the programme (Criterion 2). Standard 2. The content of the programme.	Standard 2. Educational programmes Standard 4. Teaching staff and methodological support (Criterion 4). Standard 5. Organization of the educational process (Criteria 1, 3, 6, 7). Standard 6. Internal quality assurance system (Criterion 3).
1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.	Standard 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.	Standard 5. Organization of the academic process. Standard 4. Human resources and methodological provision of the programme (Criterion 2).	Standard 5. Organization of the educational process. Standard 6. Internal quality assurance system (Criterion 4).
1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification.	Standard 4. Student admission, support of academic achievements and graduation.	Standard 7. Competitiveness of the programme (Criterion 2).	Standard 7. Competitiveness of the programme (Criteria 3, 4).
1.5. Teaching staff.	Standard 5. Teaching staff.	Standard 4. Human resources and methodological provision of the programme (Criterion 1).	Standard 4. Teaching staff and methodological support (Criterion 1).
1.6. Learning resources and student support.	Standard 6. Learning resources and student support.	Standard 3. Resource provision of the programme. Standard 4. Human resources and methodological provision of the programme (Criterion 2).	Standard 3. Resources Standard 4. Teaching staff and methodological support (Criteria 2, 3, 4).
1.7. Information management.	Standard 7. Collection, analysis and use of information for managing the study programme.	Standard 6. Internal quality assurance system of the programme.	Standard 6. Internal quality assurance system (Criteria 1, 2).
1.8. Public information.	Standard 8. Public information.	Standard 7. Competitiveness of the programme.	Standard 7. Competitiveness of programmes.
1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes.	Standard 9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes.	Standard 6. Internal quality assurance system of the programme.	Standard 6. Internal quality assurance system (Criteria 3, 4, 5).

		Standard 7. Competitiveness of the programme.	Standard 7. Competitiveness of programmes (Criterion 1).
1.10. Cyclical external quality assurance.	Standard 10. Cyclical external quality assurance of study programmes.	Are being developed	Are being developed

These standards are taking into account also the Russian legislation requiring that HEIs in their autonomous capacity duly develop and adopt local regulatory documents describing the operation of internal quality assurance system. With this mission in mind the NCPA standards applied in accreditation procedures been developed (see SAR, p.26).

The ESG standard related to cyclic external quality assurance for public accreditation for study programmes delivered by further professional education institutions and for public accreditation of further professional HEIs is under development, however, as accreditation periods are limited in time this inserts the cyclic approach in the procedures.

As outlined by NCPA one distinctive feature of their procedures is the option to run procedures jointly with other international accreditors. The principles and standards for joint procedures are published and the correlation between standards and criteria for joint accreditation and ESG internal quality assurance procedures is provided (SAR, p. 27 ff.). Standards and criteria for joint accreditation of educational programmes developed by NCPA with EVALAG (Germany), ACQUIN (Germany) and HEEC (China) are harmonised with standards of the internal quality assurance procedures of ESG part 1. (SAR, p. 31). The mapping between the standards and criteria for joint accreditation and ESG internal quality assurance procedures is provided (SAR, p. 29 - 30) and looks as follows:

ESG (Part 1)	NCPA and evalag's (Germany) Standards and Criteria for joint accreditation of programmes delivered by HEIs	NCPA and ACQUIN's (Germany) Standards and Criteria for joint accreditation of programmes delivered by HEIs	NCPA and HEEC's (China) Standards and Criteria for joint accreditation of study programmes delivered by Chinese HEIs	NCPA and HEEC's (China) Standards and Criteria for joint accreditation of study programmes delivered by Russian HEIs
1.1. Policy for quality assurance	Standard 6. Quality assurance (Criteria 2, 3, 4)	Part 4. Quality management 4.1 Quality assurance	Standard 1. Educational objectives (Criterion 1.3) Standard 3. Curriculum (Criterion 3.4) Standard 6. Quality assurance (Criterion 6.1)	Standard 1. Policy (mission, vision) and procedures for quality assurance
1.2. Design and approval of programmes	Standard 1. Programme profile (Criteria 1-7) Standard 2. Curriculum	Part 1. Goals and objectives 1.2 Objectives of the study programme and learning outcomes Part 2. Concept	Standard 1. Educational objectives (Criteria 1.1, 1.2) Standard 2. Graduate	Standard 2. Design and approval of programmes

	(all criteria)	2.1 Study programme structure 2.2 Learning objectives, modularization, ECTS 2.3. Learning context	outcomes (all criteria) Standard 3. Curriculum (Criteria 3.1, 3.3)	
1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	Standard 2. Curriculum (Criteria 2, 3) Standard 4. Organisation of the study programme (Criteria 2, 3, 6, 7) Standard 6. Quality assurance (Criterion 7)	Part 2. Concept 2.3 Learning context Part 3. Implementation of the study programme 3.2 Decision-making processes, organization and cooperation (<i>participation of students (in decision making)</i>) 3.5 Gender equality and equal opportunities	Standard 3. Curriculum (Criterion 3.2) Standard 4. Faculty (Criterion 4.4) Standard 7. Student development (Criterion 7.3)	Standard 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	Standard 3. Student assessment (all criteria) Standard 4. Organisation of the study programme (Criteria 1, 2)	Part 2. Concept 2.4 Admission requirements Part 3. Implementation of the study programme 3.3 The system of assessment of the students' knowledge/competencies 3.4 Transparency and documentation (<i>Certifying documents (certificate, diploma, Diploma Supplement...)</i>)	Standard 7. Student development (Criteria 7.1, 7.2)	Standard 4. Student admission, support of academic achievements and graduation
1.5. Teaching staff	Standard 1. Programme profile (Criterion 8) Standard 5. Resources (Criteria 2, 3)	Part 3. Implementation of the study programme 3.1 Resources (<i>3.1.2 Current material resources...</i>)	Standard 4. Faculty (all criteria)	Standard 5. Teaching staff
1.6. Learning resources and student support	Standard 4. Organisation of the study programme (Criterion 7) Standard 5. Resources (Criteria 1, 4, 5)	Part 3. Implementation of the study programme 3.1 Resources (<i>3.1.2 Current material resources...</i>) 3.4 Transparency and documentation (<i>availability of the support system</i>)	Standard 5. Teaching and learning resources (all criteria)	Standard 6. Learning resources and student support
1.7. Information management	Standard 6. Quality assurance (Criterion 6)	Part 3. Implementation of the study programme 3.2. Decision-making processes, organization and cooperation (<i>Availability of documents regulating decision-making and organizational processes</i>)	Standard 6. Quality assurance (Criterion 6.3)	Standard 7. Collection, analysis and use of information for managing the study programme
1.8. Public information	Standard 6. Quality assurance (Criterion 8)	Part 3. Implementation of the study programme 3.4 Transparency and documentation	Standard 8 Distinctive highlights	Standard 8. Public information

		<i>(availability of published documents ...)</i>		
1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	Standard 6. Quality assurance (Criteria 1, 5, 7)	Part 4. Quality management 4.1 Quality assurance <i>(Internal evaluation as a mechanism for systematic further improvement of the programme)</i>	Standard 1. Educational objectives (Criterion 1.3) Standard 3. Curriculum (Criterion 3.4) Standard 6. Quality assurance (Criterion 6.2)	Standard 9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
1.10. Cyclical external quality assurance	Standard 6. Quality assurance (Criterion 3)	Part 4. Quality management 4.1 Quality assurance <i>(External evaluation as a mechanism for systematic further improvement of the programme)</i>	Standard 6. Quality Assurance (Criterion 6.2)	Standard 10. Cyclical external quality assurance of study programmes

Based on information provided by NCPA, the standards and procedures of joint international accreditation comply with Russian legislation and the legislation of the country the foreign QA is from and the main principles and documents of the Bologna process.

Analysis

Considering the links within NCPA between internal and external quality assurance standards it can be concluded that external quality assurance includes consideration of the ESG standards of Part 1. These standards are addressed differently, depending on the type of external quality assurance, e.g. for public accreditation of study programmes delivered by HEIs, as well study programmes delivered by further professional HEIs, and standards and criteria for public accreditation of further professional HEIs, as well for joint accreditation activities.

The standards and criteria for NCPA's public accreditation of educational programmes of higher education do correlate with Part 1 of the ESG, with a slight limitation regarding ESG 1.10 standard for cyclic external quality assurance for study programmes delivered by further professional education institutions and for public accreditation of further professional HEIs which, to make it more explicit, is under development. The panel recognises that public accreditation is a voluntary activity for HEI and thus they are not legally obliged to renew their accreditation which would make it a cyclical activity. However, the panel recognises that through the limited accreditation period NCPA's design of the procedure inherently foresees a cyclic approach. Hence, the panel believes that ESG 1.10 is also adequately covered in NCPA procedures.

Critical reflection should be given to the fact that NCPA is carrying out the accreditation of clusters of study programmes, although there is no separate NCPA standards and criteria (methodology) for assessment of clusters of study programmes. While the panel believes that clustering can be a pragmatic tool to increase resource efficiency and is not uncommon in the EHEA, it is important to recognise that the approach, as also foreseen by NCPA regulations, is still based on the logic of programme accreditation. Hence the target must be an assessment of the programmes that are part of the cluster. Otherwise, if the review focuses on the cluster – and not the programmes within it – reviewing a cluster would create a separate activity that is different in nature and not part of the

activities eligible for this review. For this reason, the panel outlines that it will reflect on cluster accreditation as a procedure reviewing a number of programmes that are combined in the same review and not as a separate activity (which it should otherwise be). (see ESG 2.2)

The design of joint accreditation standards with other international accreditors can be seen as creating an added value for the HEIs under review as they are also confronted with international demands and thus help moving forward internal QA systems by creating additional learning experiences.

On a clearly positive note it became obvious to the panel that NCPA as an accreditation agency recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance by designing their methodology and the chosen approach of running their reviews. This is strongly in line with the fact that public accreditation is a voluntary practice for the HEIs. Discussions on site showed that NCPA manages well to explain European standards of EQA to HEIs and the panel believes – reflecting some comments in the interviews, that for the benefit of the development of the system, in the future NCPA could further promote the involvement of students in the processes of internal quality assurance within HEIs.

Panel commendations

The panel appreciates the efforts of NCPA to recognise joint accreditation as a continuous learning source for addressing the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance during evaluation activities.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

NCPA could finalise the explicit inclusion of ESG standard 1.10 related to cyclic external quality assurance in the methodology for public accreditation for study programmes delivered by further professional education institutions and for public accreditation of further professional HEIs.

NCPA could further promote the involvement of students in the processes of internal quality assurance within HEIs.

Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

2014 review recommendation

- Design clearer follow up procedures,
- Regulate follow-up procedures in the evaluation contract signed with the university,
- Set up a process to encourage follow-up demands,
- Provide more transparency in the selection of the National Accreditation Board members
- Provide feedback on the accreditation decision to the expert panels.

Evidence

The Federal Law on Education in the Russian Federation sets a framework for the concept of public accreditation and the procedure for its conduct. Also, the law sets requirements for accrediting bodies while accreditation agencies develop their own methodologies.

Based on SAR (p. 31) the aim of public accreditation is recognition of the quality of graduate's education and training as well as identifying achievements of the HEI in research. NCPA aims to improve quality of education, form the culture of quality in HEIs, promote the image of Russian education nationally and internationally by way of undertaking public accreditation of educational programmes in compliance with ESG using the European four-stage model with due account of Russian legislation and traditions of Russian higher education.

Along with the strategic goals of NCPA development, the goals, objectives and principles of each procedure are defined before they are developed. As reflected in the respective documents and explained in the SAR, the goal of each procedure is also set out in the first section of each Regulation and Guideline. In interviews with the stakeholders they explained not only to be aware of these goals, but also that they are accepted, as they were involved in the discussions formulating them.

According to SAR (p. 8) NCPA distinguishes the following processes for which it has developed separate regulations and standards for implementation:

- Accreditation of educational programmes of HEIs;
- Accreditation of institutions of further education;
- Accreditation of programmes of further education (in the sense of continuous education).

NCPA regularly surveys its external experts and representatives of HEIs involved in accreditation procedures. The findings of these surveys are taken into consideration for improvement of NCPA's procedures. Thus, on request of HEIs, Guidelines on external reviews of educational programmes were developed in 2016.

In order to allow institutions to demonstrate improvement of quality the follow up procedures have been revised and outlined in the Section 8 of the Regulations on Public Accreditation which put requirements to the HEIs to submit the report on corrective actions. The follow up procedures are included in the Agreement with HEIs (para 3.9. – 3.15. of the Agreement) (SAR, p.40).

NCPA puts efforts to ensure that the system for external quality assurance is operating in a more flexible way in case institutions are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance. For example, for the HEIs which have previously been successfully accredited by NCPA, the subsequent procedure is implemented by fewer reviewers than in case of the ordinary procedure as the HEI has already demonstrated the effectiveness of its internal quality assurance system (SAR p.32).

The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes is not mentioned in the SAR. In interviews with the representatives of public authorities as well as Management of NCPA it was confirmed that the current legislation does not consider the application of the European Approach. But if HEIs would insist on the need to address European approach, NCPA confirmed its readiness to adapt it to their processes.

Analysis

Based on recommendations from previous reviews NCPA undertook appropriate steps to improve its performance following the recommendations and suggestions given by ENQA External Review Panel and the Register Committee (EQAR).

Thus, revised regulations on Public Accreditation and Regulations of the National Accreditation Board have more detailed descriptions of follow-up procedures; the criteria for selection of the National Accreditation Board members have been advanced (see also ESG 3.2); the Regulations on the Appeals Procedure and the Appeals Committee have been developed. The panel confirms that all these steps have contributed to a positive development.

The panel confirms that the stakeholders are involved in the development of NCPA's regulations and standards and appear to be satisfied with the opportunities to provide feedback. There is cooperation with stakeholders, e.g. professional and employer associations, and stakeholder representatives also serve as experts in external review panels. As confirmed during the interviews on site the members of the National Accreditation Board and representatives of stakeholders (representatives of the Russian Student Union, Commission for Public Control and Cooperation with Public Committee of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, Union of Architects of Russia, and others) were involved in the revision of accreditation standards.

With the exception of one case, the review panel found the aims and standards of current external quality assurance processes fit for purpose. While there are no concerns for the accreditation processes for institutions of further education (1) and their programmes (2), in case of the accreditation of educational programmes (3) the panel has some concerns when it is applied for clusters of programmes.

During analysis of the documents provided by NCPA and interviews during site visit the panel noted an obvious discrepancy in the application of the methodology of accreditation of programmes of HEIs. Reflection is required to assess the accreditation of each single programme and accreditation of a cluster of programmes. Regulations on public (international and joint) accreditation of study programmes (cluster of programmes) of higher, secondary and further professional education and the Guidelines for the external reviews of study programmes do not distinguish two different types of accreditation procedures – study programme and cluster of programmes. Hence, for cluster accreditation the same rules apply as for the accreditation of single programmes. Consequently, to keep the fitness of purpose of the methodology, when looking at a cluster of programmes, the subjects of review still have to be the programmes with their individual characteristics. However, for NCPA cluster accreditations in its current application this is not the case.

The panel came to this conclusion after detailed analysis of the methodologies, the reports and decisions of National Accreditation Board. Document analysis and interviews showed that in the application those two processes differ – in case of a single study programme accreditation separate self-evaluation report is produced by HEIs, experts prepare separate evaluation report and NAB takes decisions on a single study programme. While during the process of accreditation of clusters, one self-evaluation report is prepared for a number of programmes in one cluster, it does not differentiate each programme. The same could be said about the evaluation report where assessment does not address individual learning outcomes of each programme and how they are assessed or achieved. The NAB takes a decision on the whole cluster without differentiating between the programmes within the cluster. Interviews with experts as well as the NAB showed, that coming to an overall conclusion

for a cluster without differentiating between the programmes is challenging for experts as well as decision makers. When specifically interviewed about this challenge, NCPA remembered well the two cases in a five years period where NAB took a different accreditation decision regarding one programme out of a cluster of programmes following an intensive debate within the panel as well as the NAB. It was clearly explained that this was not a regular operation and not the way it was supposed to be.

The panel also recognised that there are no regulations in place on how big a cluster can be (besides a very short definition on NCPA website), what marks programmes that come from the same area and what additional requirements are imposed to the panel of experts. Also, the review of some schedules of site visit indicated that there are no separate discussions regarding individual programmes. At the same time already a short look on NCPA website shows, that the majority of procedures cover clusters of programmes.

The fact that there is no individual assessment of programmes as part of a cluster accreditation clearly indicates that a methodology designed for programme accreditation is not fit for purpose. Hence, the regulations and practice in cluster accreditation has to be updated of NCPA's needs to distinguish cluster accreditation as a separate process and to develop separate documentation (guidelines including standards and criteria) that would fit the purpose of accreditation of a whole cluster. Consequently, the guidelines for experts on evaluation of cluster should be developed. The process also needs clear explanation on what the cluster is, what is the maximum number of programmes involved in it. The panel believes it is up to NCPA to decide if it is a separate activity that requires separate definitions and methodology, or if the current practice of cluster accreditation requires an update to focus on the programmes that are clustered for reasons of resource efficiency.

The Regulations on public (international and Joint) accreditation of study programmes (clusters of programmes) of higher education, secondary and further professional education include also the regulations towards programmes of vocational training delivered by a HEI. This means that there were a few cases when the NCPA delivered accreditation of basic programmes of vocational education. As it was explained during the visit by Director of NCPA these kind of study programmes are offered by HEIs in Russia and therefore they became a part of study programmes clusters evaluation. This is not typical for EHEA and not fully corresponds with the services provided by NCPA (SAR, p. 5) that it provides accreditation services to higher education institutions and institutions of further professional education. Basic programmes of vocational education are accredited using the same standards and criteria as programmes of higher education. Clearly the panel believes that the methodology used is not designed to assess vocational training – particularly as part of a larger cluster. NCPA is advised to exclude basic programmes of vocational education from cluster accreditation. If the legislation required that such programmes would be accredited during the same procedure, a separate report should be drafted focusing on vocational training.

NCPA is open and receptive to the changing requirements of stakeholders by constantly improving and diversifying its QA procedures. Some stakeholders expressed an opinion that 10 standards of public accreditation are excessive, and their number should be reduced to seven to avoid unnecessary repetition. Following stakeholders' feedback NCPA is planning to discuss this issue with different focus groups and launch pilot projects in the nearest future (SAR, 32) which speaks for the receptiveness of the organisation as well as the importance it assigns to stakeholders' opinion.

The documentation that was made available to the panel does not predefine any specific mechanism for consultations on newly developed or revised regulations or guidelines. Although the Regulations of National Accreditation Board highlights the responsibilities of NAB regarding the consideration and approval of Regulations on public accreditation, there is no requirements set and mechanism developed for regular (for example, annual) review of its accreditation processes or standards. Instead, feedback from experts and HEIs is gathered via the feedback tool „Corrector-NCPA” as an ongoing process. It might be wise to consider to a regular and institutionalised way to discuss the results and exchange with stakeholders.

The previous panel recommendation was on providing feedback on the accreditation decision to the expert panels. The recommendation is largely implemented as on the one hand the accreditation decision is published on NCPA's website. On the other hand, the panel learned that emails are sent to panel members after a decision is taken and the decision is published.

There is a room for further positioning NCPA as “... a centre of innovation in the sphere of quality assurance by way of participating in programmes and projects on quality evaluation”. NCPA shares information and its own experience of evaluation procedures by presenting at international QA forums, conferences and seminars. NCPA’s international cooperation is a dynamic field with a potential for further development. Although there is no clear evidence in communication of latest innovations delivered by NCPA.

Panel recommendations

Review its practice of accreditation of clusters of programmes to ensure its fitness for purpose. Either the practice has to be adjusted to the methodology of programme reviews or the activity has to become a separate activity with its own methodology. This review should include regulations for clusters (qualitative and quantitative) that have to correspond with experts (qualitative and quantitative) and also cover the impacts for site visit schedules and reports as well as final decisions.

Separate accreditation procedures of basic programmes of vocational education.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

1. NCPA could reflect on international experiences to ensure more flexible ways in activities carried out by NCPA to demonstrate the effectiveness of internal quality assurance of HEIs.
2. NCPA could develop a mechanism for regular review of its accreditation processes and standards together with stakeholders to reassure its fitness for purpose.

Panel conclusion: partially compliant

ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment

- | |
|--------------------------|
| - a consistent follow-up |
|--------------------------|

2014 review recommendation

- Set up a process to encourage follow-up demands
- Increase the impact of external evaluation results in order to encourage universities to be re-evaluated

Evidence

There is a published list of regulations and guidelines that is available on NCPA website in the separate section “Accreditation”. It includes the regulations, standards as well as Codes of ethics for the NAB and reviewers. It also provides guidelines for HEIs focussing on the self-evaluation but also how to prepare a report on corrective measures following an accreditation decision.

The standards and procedures of public accreditation of study programmes used by NCPA are developed in compliance with the Russian legislation in the sphere of education (Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation”, Article 96), and the main principles and documents of the Bologna process, particularly, the ESG (SAR, p. 33).

The panel learned during the interviews on site that the reliability of the procedures is ensured by providing detailed documentation of all steps of accreditation, specially developed forms, guidelines, surveys, software. NCPA staff members coordinate each external review procedure. After every accreditation procedure NCPA’s staff members analyse good practice, emerging problems, the work of experts and other related issues.

The description of the accreditation procedure and the regulating documents are publicly available on NCPA's website and are uniform for all HEIs. This includes organizing and conducting self-evaluation report (SER) by the institution as well as an external assessment which includes a site visit that is followed by a report. A follow up procedure is also implemented.

NCPA advises the HEI on the issues arising during the preparation for accreditation and in the process of self-evaluation of the study programme. NCPA regulations foresee that the SER is sent to NCPA no less than 35 days before the external site visit in order to guarantee a reliable and consistent assessment by the experts.

All of NCPA's accreditation procedures include a number of successive steps, which are documented, published and are subject to bilateral agreement with the HEI undergoing accreditation. These steps are as follows: application; self-evaluation of study programmes against predefined standards; site-visit of an external review panel; preparing the Final and Summary Reports with the expert conclusion; making an accreditation decision; publication of the Final and Summary Reports; entering the accreditation data into registers, follow-up.

The panel reviewed a number of Self Evaluation Reports of institutions and programmes as well as numerous expert’s reports from the different activities to compare consistency and assess the implementation process based on hard evidences. Also, the panel carefully reviewed consistency in the publication of reports and decisions.

NCPA explains in SAR that besides direct impacts of quality improvement at the institution the results of public accreditation are considered by the state during control procedures, and when distributing state-funded places. The accredited programmes become more recognizable nationally and

internationally, thus attracting more international students; there are more opportunities for international cooperation (joint projects and programmes). Besides, at the time of preparation for the external evaluation the study programme is pre-emptively improved to comply with the international requirements. Students can benefit from expanding opportunities for academic mobility and employment. Teaching staff can benefit from peer communication and experience exchange. Experts benefit from being introduced to new practices and gaining new expertise” (SAR, p.33).

Analysis

Based on the available information and reviewed documents the panel can confirm that for each of the three activities the procedure generally follows the predefined four steps approach and also includes a follow up. Policies foresee that the expert’s reports and summary reports are available on the website. (see ESG 2.6)

Since the methodologies for evaluating clusters of study programmes are identical with the ones used for accreditation of single study programmes of higher, secondary and further professional education it became obvious to the panel that this sometimes leads to a vague implementation practice. Experts explained the challenge to come to a joint conclusion for recommendations that address the whole cluster. Also, the NCPA management highlighted during the site visit that it can be challenging if one programme in the cluster clearly is of better quality or in cases where one programme lacks behind. The panel concludes that the description of the procedure of Accreditation provided in the Regulations is more related to the evaluation of individual study programmes. The same refers also to the Internal Quality Assurance system which addresses the algorithm of public accreditation procedure only in case of accreditation of educational programme (Internal Quality Assurance System, p. 15). Consequently, creating consistency and reliability in the implementation process is challenging when looking at cluster accreditations. However, the panel already reflected on this issue when considering the fitness for purpose of the methodology and believes that the weaknesses in the implementation disclose the problems of the methodology and thus does not intent to overemphasise this challenge here. (see ESG 2.2)

For all three activities under review to increase consistency in the decision-making process a helpful tool are summary reports that are compiled by NCPA's staff and approved by the Director of the NCPA. They compile the key findings of the expert groups and allow the NAB a quick orientation. Policies foresee that these reports are also published on the NCPA website and the panel found that these summary reports are available for all procedures, even for those were the full report is not available online. (see ESG 2.6)

The National Accreditation Board members confirmed that the access to the full experts’ reports are provided and the decision is based not only on the basis of Summary reports, but based on evidence of full documentation provided. They explained that experts could also be approached, if needed, during the decision taking to clarify on certain issues.

Another key aspect the review panel carefully looked at was the follow-up process. It can be positively mentioned that following the recommendation of the last ENQA review there is a follow up process implemented for all procedures that lead to recommendations, which practically means almost all procedures. Based on NCPA Regulations on public (international and joint) accreditation of study programmes (clusters of programmes) of higher, secondary and further professional education in case of full accreditation (6 years) the HEI has to submit to NCPA a plan on improvement of the study programme (cluster of programmes) with the account of comments and recommendation of the

External Review Panel (if available) within a month after decision on accreditation. There is no feedback provided to the HEI on this plan, although NCPA regulations foresee that in case of re-accreditation of the study programme it is required to include the information on how the recommendations of the external review panel have been addressed by the programme.

In case of reduced term of the accreditation (less than 6 years) the HEI has to submit a plan of actions (road map) on addressing recommendations of the external review panel and the National Accreditation Board 60 days after a decision on accreditation. NCPA examines the plan for 15 days and, if necessary, informs the HEI about necessary changes and/or additions to the plan. The HEI submits to NCPA report on corrective actions which has been undertaken to address the recommendations in accordance with the plan. After considering the Report on corrective actions at the meeting of the NAB a decision may be taken on extending the accreditation term for 2 years. These decisions of the NAB usually happen without consulting experts in the field. While in certain cases an additional site visit by 1–2 experts can be recommended by the NAB before coming to a decision regarding the extension of the accreditation period, in the future it might also be wise to consider involving experts who came up with the recommendation in the assessment of the corrective measures.

The panel of experts learned, that also in cases where a programme/cluster is accredited for the full period and no corrective measures have to be implemented, HEI pay a lot of attention to delivering the follow up report and carefully considers expert's recommendations. This reflects the approach that public accreditation is highly enhancement oriented and a voluntary activity of the institutions. Particularly in this light it remains unclear to the experts why these follow up reports are not published as they constitute an important part of the outcome of the procedure and are highly relevant not only for the public but also to ensure transparency of activities of NCPA.

Panel recommendations

Publish follow up reports on the website to ensure transparency and consistency of NCPA's operations.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

NCPA could consider involving experts in evaluation of reports of corrective actions in case of reduced terms of accreditation.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

2014 review recommendation

Improve the briefing of experts before the site visit (especially for the student members and members of labour market)

Evidence

NCPA explains in its SAR that the quality of the procedure is ensured by the competence of the experts involved. There are different practices for selecting expert panels depending on the type of accreditation (national, international, joint) including academic experts, representatives of student community and employer associations. The academic reviewers are selected from the database of over 1 000 Russian experts under the agreement with the Guild of experts in higher education (SAR, p. 34).

The criteria for selection of experts are also published, e.g. as part of the internal quality assurance system (pp.10-11). They are also explicitly mentioned in the SAR and the panel identified that these two sources also state slightly different criteria (compare ESG 3.6). In case of international or joint accreditation in addition to academic and/or professional experience an expert should have a good command of English in order to maintain communication in an international panel. (SAR, p. 35).

Experts – representatives of professional community (employers) are nominated by professional organizations – the key stakeholders in graduates' employment, relevant ministries (departments), or employers' unions. The selection criteria focus on relevant competencies and work experience in leadership positions in the field of activity that is relevant to the study programme under review (SAR, p.34).

Experts – representatives of student community (undergraduates, post graduate students) are nominated by student organizations and unions or by higher education institutions. Selection criteria are: recommendation of the institutional administration; good knowledge of regulatory and legal framework in the sphere of higher education; and good knowledge of the basic principles of the Bologna process (SAR, p. 34).

NCPA management explained during the site visit that it puts a high priority to the inclusion of international experts and that – as there is a high percentage of joint or international accreditations – there are international experts in a high percentage of procedures. The SAR outlines that out of 761 experts that were involved in NCPA procedures 258 were international experts.

NCPA organises training sessions for experts, including students and employers on public accreditation procedures. A month before the site visit, they are given access to their personal accounts in the Automated Support System developed by NCPA where experts can access the accreditation visit related methodological materials and a communication is supported through the Automated Support System. An initial meeting is organised for the experts at the beginning of each site visit which starts with a briefing by the NCPA Coordinator. In addition, NCPA offers webinars as well as online briefings for experts before the site visit takes place. Furthermore, and also in reflection of prior reviews recommendation, students are trained during the Annual Forum of the Russian Student Union (2015-2018) (SAR, p.35).

The NCPA director is in charge of approving the panel composition, after which NCPA coordinator agrees the Panel composition with the HEI. The HEI has the right to decline the suggested nominations of experts in cases of the conflicts of interest. If the reasons are well grounded NCPA changes the candidates and initiates a second procedure of selecting experts.

The SAR (p. 13) outlines that no student representative is involved in the panels when reviewing institutions of further education. This policy was also confirmed during interviews with institutions and the NCPA management.

Analysis

It is important to recognise that external experts carry out reviews as part of all three activities of NCPA under review. As described above NCPA liaises well with the relevant stakeholders to include diverse perspectives in the review processes leading to the fact that employer representatives are part of the review panels and that their voice is equally heard. The panel confirms that the selection process of experts is well designed. As it is the director who is in charge of confirming the expert panels, it is obvious that there is special responsibility in his hands. As described above this involvement in the operational implementation should be considered as one additional argument not to involve him/her in the final decision making to keep the independence of the different responsibilities (see ESG 3.3).

Considering the specifics there is mismatch between the expert's selection criteria mentioned in the SAR (p.34) and the criteria outlined in the internal quality assurance system (p. 10). The criteria for selection of experts (SAR, p. 34) are: for representatives of academic community – work experience in the sphere of education not less than 7 years, research and industry; work experience in leadership positions; academic degree and title; professional competency in the field of the study programme under review. The internal quality assurance system states (p.10) that criteria for selection of experts of academic community are work experience in higher education; work experience in managerial position; academic title and degree; the field of activity that is relevant to the educational programme under review. While these inconsistencies were already discussed during the site visit and could be explained procedurally, the panel believes that consistency in regulation and communication of the criteria for the selection of experts of academic community should be assured.

The student's representatives are not involved in the public accreditation of study programmes delivered by further professional education institutions, as well in the accreditation procedure of the further education institutions. During the meeting with students' representatives' students demonstrated willingness and readiness to be part of the NCPA evaluation team for evaluation of the further professional study programs and further education institutions. It might be helpful for NCPA to enhance the definition of student in this regard and recognise that while in further education programmes the characteristics of students might differ from the one in "traditional" programmes, still it is the perspective of the learner that brings valuable addition for EQA. Hence the inclusion of students in these procedures is required.

Considering the training of experts, the panel particularly addressed this issue when interviewing with review panel members and students and concludes that the training activities are fit for purpose and well balanced. There were examples of individual skype meetings with NCPA coordinators when experts felt unsure about their role in the preparation for their tasks. Furthermore, the issue of potential conflicts of interests was discussed and the panel found no reasons for increased scepticism as the practiced policies are appropriate.

Based on the SAR, p. 35, the chair of the Review Panel is appointed from representatives of the academic community, who has intensive experience of participation in QA procedures. However, this is not stated in the Regulations on public (international and joint) accreditation of study programmes (clusters of programmes) of higher, secondary and further professional education section three on review panel (Regulations, p. 6). Furthermore, based on the regulations it is not clear who appoints the chair of the expert panel, e.g. who makes decision about the appointment. While there seems to be a well-established practice the panel suggest to further clarify on these issues in the next update of these procedures.

In the SWOT analysis NCPA mentions the threat of limited participation of major employers in accreditation procedures. While on a regular basis NCPA cooperates with the employers in the sphere of building, architecture, forestry and some others, there is less active participation from employers from other fields. The panel believes that NCPA should build on the good practices in the field where communication works well and expand these to other areas to ensure broader participation of the employers in the accreditation procedures.

Panel commendations

NCPA is commended for the high and systemic involvement of international experts into its accreditation procedures.

Panel recommendations

Include students' representatives in the public accreditation of study programmes delivered by further professional education institutions, as well in the accreditation procedure of the further education institutions.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

NCPA could ensure consistency in the communication of the criteria for selection of experts for representatives of academic community.

NCPA could expand its good practice for ensuring broader participation of the employers in the accreditation procedures.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

2014 review recommendation

Clarify the procedure and criteria for granting limited accreditation (1, 2 or 3 years)

Evidence

NCPA criteria on external evaluations are published on their website. These criteria are based on 10 standards which have a clear division of issues to considerate and a sample list of reference materials applicable to it. These criteria are specified within the "guidelines for self-evaluation of study programmes" and the "Guidelines on external reviews of educational programmes". Every standard is evaluated against NCPA's guidelines and rated in a scale from full compliance to non-compliance. Only for internal use of the expert's panel, each standard is divided in specific criteria which are rated internally. According to guidelines for experts, experts should base their judgements on different kinds of evidences, from Self-Evaluation Reports to oral evidences obtained at site visits.

External panels make recommendations for every standard evaluated. NCPA NAB makes the final formal decision based on the summary report composed by NCPA staff while NAB has also access to

full reports that are written by the external evaluation panel. During the interviews with NAB members the panel learned that NAB uses all these resources in the decision-making process. Considering accreditations of clusters of programmes the main evidence also lies in the reports of the panels. The ENQA review panel reviewed a number of these reports where they were available online and found that there is little evidence or evaluations for individual programmes, only for the cluster as a whole.

NCPA has used the recommendations from the last review to clarify the criteria for granting different terms (full term -6 years-, reduced term-2 or 4 years- and denial of accreditation). These are now specifically outlined in the regulations on public accreditations p. 8-9 and base the time period on the results of the final report. For instance, a study programme would be accredited for 2 years if more than 3 standards receive partial compliance.

Analysis

NCPA has a set of consistent guidelines for evaluations both for external panels and institutions. These guidelines are clear enough to clarify everybody's work on evaluations processes. Based on these guidelines the panel appreciates NCPA's efforts to define a clear scale for assessment. The panel recognises that there are different layers aiming at consistency in the assessment process. The NCPA coordinator who accompanies the procedure clearly is an important resource for the panel when making assessments. Also, the scrutinizing process of the reports is an important mechanism supporting consistency in the application of the published standards.

The final responsibility for the accreditation decision undisputedly lies with the NAB who independently makes its decision. Hence it can be expected that the information available to the NAB allows for a consistent decision-making process. The panel believes that in order to assure this, the assessment of the experts needs to be based on clear, available and described/documented evidence in the report. The ENQA review panel found little indication that the reports available to the NAB allow a comprehensive explanation how experts come to recommendations. While this will be discussed under ESG 2.6, it cannot be ignored when looking at criteria for outcomes as a comprehensive evidence basis forms the fundament of every decision. The NAB is responsible for a consistent decision and hence it also has to reassure a consistent assessment by the experts that forms the baseline for their recommendations. This requires an adequate presentation of evidences in the report which currently is not fully given.

Despite this need for a more solid evidence base the panel finds that valuable clarifications have been implemented with the establishment of criteria for granting different periods of accreditation. These criteria regulate formal decisions and also comply with the recommendation made by last ENQA external review held during 2014. This panel conclusion is also supported by the interviews with reviewed HEI as well as members of the NAB who found these new criteria helpful to come to a decision.

While already mentioned earlier, due to the broad scope of critical reflection on the implementation on cluster accreditation, it should be mentioned that there are also no criteria that allow different assessments of programmes in a cluster and consequently no criteria for different decisions regarding one cluster. This is supported by a lack of individual evidences for individual programmes in the cluster. Reports only evaluate the entire cluster and consequently do not provide enough evidence to apply criteria, therefore neither to provide consistency in this regard.

The panel carefully discussed the impact of the weak evidence base on the assessment of the standard and concluded that it affects the assessment of ESG 2.6. However, as consistent use of criteria is impossible without adequate evidence it is impossible to fully comply with this standard without adequately evidenced reports.

Panel recommendations

Improve the evidence base in the expert reports in order to allow consistency in the decision-making process.

Implement procedures and criteria allowing different decisions in accreditation procedures of a cluster of programmes.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

2014 review recommendation

Publish the accreditation decision on the website.

Evidence

NCPA explains in their SAR that it publishes assessment reports in full on their website. The final report of the external review panel is published on NCPA's website in Russian. In case of an international or joined accreditation procedure Final Reports are published in English, and/or Chinese. As stated in the SAR (p. 37) NCPA does not publish the formal decision made by the National Accreditation Board together with the final reports nor summary reports. The SAR explains that "after the National Accreditation Board makes a decision on accreditation of a study programme (cluster of programmes) NCPA within a month publishes on the NCPA's website the materials of the National Accreditation Board meeting (presentations, minutes...)".

NCPA provides Guidelines for External Reviews of Study Programmes that are publicly available and aim at assuring that the final report should cover the context and main stages of the review, composition of the review panel, purposes and objectives of the review, stages of the review, self-evaluation, site visit, and description of the study programme(s) under review, findings according to the standards, recommendations for improvement, conclusion and annexes (SAR p 37). Institutions have the opportunity to point out factual errors on the final report made by the evaluation panel.

NCPA also prepares summary reports based on the full reports made by panel experts. These are also published on the website and also available to the NAB as part of the decision making.

In interviews with the NCPA management and reviewed HEIs the panel learned that reports are also published in cases of negative decisions. The panel also particularly reviewed the availability of this report.

Analysis

The panel positively recognises that since the last review NCPA has adjusted its policies and practices regarding the publication of reports and decisions. Indeed, decisions can now be found online within the minutes of the NAB which means that both the report and the decision are published. However, the panel learned by studying the website of the agency that report and the decision are not published together. Within the NCPA website it is well possible to find the information about a certain procedure, which in often cases means that there is a link to the report. However, in order to find the decision external people will have to look for the minutes of the NAB which are available sorted per meeting of the NAB and consequently then along the agenda of the NAB. The panel clearly concludes that the report and the decision are not published together and even in the broadest interpretation of the standard it has to be recognised that it is not easy to find a decision unless the reader know exactly where to look for it on the website. While the website structure would invite just an additional link to the respective decision the panel did not succeed in finding a reason for this implementation during the site visit.

Furthermore, the panel initially was under the impression that not all reports are published in full and instead for a number of procedures only summary reports are available. Benefiting from the clarifications of NCPA staff the panel learned that on the Russian website the full reports are available together with summary reports. However, the English version of the website the information is misleading: full reports are published only in case of joint accreditations. While summary reports are published in all cases there is a small delay in the publication of the English version due to the need for translation. The website features a link called "view the report", and in cases where the summary report is presented together with the full report, this link leads to the full report; in cases when the full report is in Russian only, the same link „view the report“ leads to summary report only. Consequently, and outside reader will conclude that only summary reports are published. Recognizing the big importance NCPA attaches to internationalization, the agency should assure that at least the information provided on the English website is not misleading.

Looking at the individual reports the panel positively confirms that reports are well structured which is a good reflection of the implementation of the guidelines. Reports include identification of good practice and recommendations for follow up activities. This is very much in line with the mission of NCPA and the voluntary character of public accreditation in Russia. The ENQA review panel appreciates that institutions have the possibility to identify factual errors and found consistent evidence that this opportunity is appropriately used in the process. Continuing the assessment of the reports the panel found that, besides being well structured, the level of analysis and reflection of evidence clearly offers room for development. The ENQA review panel did not manage to understand the recommendations and findings of the panel based on the evidence and analysis provided in the reports. Different reports (both in English and in Russian) were reviewed to avoid wrong sampling and the panel concludes that the evidence representation and analysis of the found evidence should be enhanced in the reports in order to allow the external reader to understand how the panel came to the recommendations and conclusions.

The lack of assessment of individual programmes in cases of cluster accreditation is another point that was already mentioned earlier and becomes most obvious when considering reports. The panel believes that NCPA should adjust this practice (or make cluster accreditation a separate activity with a separate methodology).

Panel recommendations

Adjust its publication practice and publish accreditation decisions together with the full reports.

Assure transparency regarding the publication of reports on the English website.

Assure that reports contain an adequate evidence basis and analysis in order to explain recommendations in a comprehensible way.

Panel conclusion: partially compliant

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

2014 review recommendation

Establish an independent Appeals Committee

Evidence

Following the last external review NCPA has approved and published updated regulations on the newly established Appeals Committee. These regulations take into account the creation of an Appeals committee and the general procedure to consider an appeal of an evaluated institution. (SAR p. 37/38)

As explained in the SAR the Appeals committee comprises three independent members including the chair. The members of the Appeals committee are elected by simple majority of votes of the members of the NCPA's founders. The Appeals committee is formed of independent persons, who are not members of the NAB and are not employed by NCPA.

Evaluated HEIs have 14 work days to submit an appeal since the reception of the conclusion of the External Evaluation Panel. The regulations list two reasons for appeals that are "breach of accreditation procedure" or "evidential errors", and only in the cases where evaluation panel has stated that "the study programme has in principle unrecoverable deficiencies and cannot be accredited" an appeal can be filed. The regulations foresee that the Appeals committee takes its decisions unanimously based on facts. The committee has one month to consider the appeal since the reception of the appeal. There is a procedure to consider the appeal and also to ensure the enforcement of the appeals approved, that can provoke a second site visit if the accreditation procedure is violated.

NCPA itself finds in their SAR that existing regulations on the appeals procedure should be elaborated and a procedure to deal with complaints should be defined in more detail. During the site visit the review panel also discussed the issue with evaluated institutions and found that they are aware of the

existence of the appeals procedure. At the same time the interviews confirmed the information from the SAR that until today no appeal or official complaint was received.

When reviewing the documents, the panel could not identify a complaints procedure nor references to complaints within regulations of appeals procedure and committee.

Analysis

The panel believes that the implementation of the Appeals committee was an important step in the development of NCPA operations and a clear signal in the definition of roles of the different actors in the accreditation procedures. Hence the panel appreciates NCPAs continuous efforts to constantly strengthen its orientation towards ESG compliance. At the same time the panel understands that the fact of zero appeals leaves the requirements of such procedure more in theoretical assumptions than in overcoming practical challenges of applications.

However, the panel found that the regulations define that appeals can only be submitted related to the decision of the External Evaluation Panel if the panel finds that “the study programme has in principle unrecoverable deficiencies and cannot be accredited”. Consequently, the panel concluded that not every formal decision can be appealed, and decisions are excluded where programmes do not agree with some conclusions, but generally receive a positive decision. Also underlining the independence of the decisions of the NAB the panel wonders why the appeal is bound to a finding taken by the external review panel. Based on these findings the panel concludes by agreeing to NCPAs self-assessment that the appeal regulations will require further development and clarification. In this context NCPA should also extend the regulations by adding a formal complaints procedure.

Panel recommendations

Continue to refine the appeals procedure to allow appeals to all formal decisions and establish a complaints procedure.

Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

ESG 3.1

NCPA is commended for involvement of stakeholders into the governance and activities of the Agency. Stakeholders highly value involvement of students into accreditation processes.

ESG 3.4

The panel commends NCPA for regularly analysing the system of quality assurance in Russian Federation and for highlighting good practices of it as well as areas for improvement.

ESG 3.5

The panel commends the Agency for its experienced and devoted staff. They all support the mission of NCPA and are involved in the process of continuous improvement of activities.

IT resources are admirable and help in making activities even more effective.

The panel commends NCPA for inclusion of all stakeholders in the Management of the Agency. This builds on the reputation of the Agency and is highly valued by the HEIs.

ESG 2.1

The panel appreciates the efforts of NCPA to recognise joint accreditation as a continuous learning source for addressing the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance during evaluation activities.

ESG 2.4

NCPA is commended for the high and systemic involvement of international experts into its accreditation procedures.

OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel found NCPA in full compliance with the ESG in four out of 14 standards reflecting NCPAs clear orientation towards the implementation of the European perspective of QA in the Russian Federation. In eight out of 14 standards the panel found NCPA to be substantially compliant with the ESG, while two standards that were assessed only partially compliant are 2.2 Fitness for Purpose and 2.6 Reporting. The summary of the compliance assessment by the panel looks as follows:

- Fully compliant for the following ESGs – 3.2; 3.5; 3.7 and 2.1
- Substantially compliant in the following ESGs – 3.1; 3.3; 3.4; 3.6; 2.3; 2.4; 2.5 and 2.7
- Partially compliant: 2.2 and 2.6

ESG 3.1 - substantially compliant

The Panel recommends:

- 1) that NCPA amends its Statute to explicitly assign the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of its strategy to the General meeting of Founders;
- 2) to involve a mechanism of risk identification into NCPAs strategic planning;
- 3) to revise NCPAs mission statement that it clearly defines the full range of its activities.

ESG 3.2 - fully compliant

ESG 3.3 - substantially compliant

Limit membership to the NAB to people who are not involved at any other stage of the EQA procedure.

Define clearer, more explicit and transparent regulations regarding the members, stakeholder percentages, and terms of office of the NAB.

ESG 3.4 - substantially compliant

Focus on analysis of the material available in its accreditation reports and produce thematic analyses on this basis to support further development of quality assurance in higher education institutions by sharing good practice and bringing enhancements. This practice should also be included in the Internal Quality Assurance System.

ESG 3.5 - fully compliant

ESG 3.6 - substantially compliant

Improve consistency of text in the documents available for internal and external use.

ESG 3.7 - fully compliant

ESG 2.1 - fully compliant

ESG 2.2 - partially compliant

Review its practice of accreditation of clusters of programmes to ensure its fitness for purpose. Either the practice has to be adjusted to the methodology of programme reviews or the activity has to become a separate activity with its own methodology. This review should include regulations for clusters (qualitative and quantitative) that have to correspond with experts (qualitative and quantitative) and also cover the impacts for site visit schedules and reports as well as final decisions.

Separate accreditation procedures of basic programmes of vocational education.

ESG 2.3 - substantially compliant

Publish follow up reports on the website to ensure transparency and consistency of NCPA's operations.

ESG 2.4 - substantially compliant

Include students' representatives in the public accreditation of study programmes delivered by further professional education institutions, as well in the accreditation procedure of the further education institutions.

ESG 2.5 - substantially compliant

Improve the evidence base in the expert reports in order to allow consistency in the decision-making process.

Implement procedures and criteria allowing different decisions in accreditation procedures of a cluster of programmes

ESG 2.6 - partially compliant

Adjust its publication practice and publish accreditation decisions together with the full reports.

Assure transparency regarding the publication of reports on the English website.

Assure that reports contain an adequate evidence basis and analysis in order to explain recommendations in a comprehensible way.

ESG 2.7 - substantially compliant

Continue to refine the appeals procedure to allow appeals to all formal decisions and establish a complaints procedure.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

If in the future NCPA would decide to widen its activities and step into advisory services, it would be beneficial to very clearly declare the boundaries of consultancy. NCPA will have to ensure that all processes are documented, published and lead to clear separation of public professional accreditation and the consultancy services.

As reflected together with NCPA management the agency could take into account the mismatch of different versions of the mission statement provided in the Strategic plan and on the webpage as well as different wordings in English and Russian versions

During the annual planning process of NCPA, the strategic plan could be used as the basis for developing annual activity plan which should align with the indicators

To strengthen positioning NCPA as a centre of innovation in the sphere of quality assurance by way of participating in programmes and projects on quality evaluation.

ESG 3.4 Thematic Analysis

The plans of the follow-up activities presented by HEIs could serve as a valuable source of information for thematic analysis showing trends of the means used by HEIs to enhance their activities. This information would be valuable for all HEIs.

ESG 3.5 Resources

NCPA could discuss how they would make use of better long-term planning in order to foresee necessary steps on how to increase financial incomes for development of the Agency.

Financial planning could become integral part of the overall process of strategic planning.

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

NCPA could provide feedback on adjustments to this who provided the feedback leading to this adjustment.

ESG 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

NCPA may consider amending its statutes with explicit provisions that NCPA is subject to an external ESG-based review every five years.

ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

NCPA could finalise the explicit inclusion of ESG standard 1.10 related to cyclic external quality assurance in the methodology for public accreditation for study programmes delivered by further professional education institutions and for public accreditation of further professional HEIs.

NCPA could further promote the involvement of students in the processes of internal quality assurance within HEIs.

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

NCPA could reflect on international experiences to ensure more flexible ways in activities carried out by NCPA to demonstrate the effectiveness of internal quality assurance of HEIs.

NCPA could develop a mechanism for regular review of its accreditation processes and standards together with stakeholders to reassure its fitness for purpose.

ESG 2.3 Implementing processes

NCPA could consider involving experts in evaluation of reports of corrective actions in case of reduced terms of accreditation.

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

NCPA could ensure consistency in the communication of the criteria for selection of experts for representatives of academic community.

NCPA could expand its good practice for ensuring broader participation of the employers in the accreditation procedures.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

SCHEDULE OF THE SITE VISIT OF ENQA EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL

March 11, Monday		
TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
	Arrival in Moscow, hotel «Ibis» check in	
17.30 – 19.00	The first meeting of the External Review Panel members	Review Panel
19.00 – 20.00	Meeting with NCPA resource person	Galina Motova , Deputy Director, NCPA
20.30	Dinner (Review Panel only)	Review Panel
March 12, Tuesday		
09.00	Arrival at International Industrial Academy (IIA)	
09.00 – 09.30	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel
09.30 – 10.15	Meeting of the Review Panel with NCPA's Director	Vladimir Navodnov , Director, NCPA Olga Filippova , interpreter
10.15 – 10.30	Break	

<p>10.30 – 11.15</p>	<p>Meeting of the Review Panel with the representatives of public authorities in the sphere of education</p>	<p>Pavel Kondrashov, Chief of Executive Office, Russian Federation State Duma Committee for Education and Science</p> <p>Nikolai Maksimov, President of the Guild of Experts in Higher Education, Chair of the Coordination Council of National Educational Associations and Scientific and Methodological Councils (1997-2015)</p> <p>Olga Oleinikova, Director of National Erasmus + Office in Russia, member of the working group on the Bologna process</p> <p>Zoya Makarovskaya, member of the Public Council under the Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science (Rosobrnadzor)</p> <p>Olga Filippova, interpreter</p>
<p>11.15 – 12.00</p>	<p>Meeting of the Review Panel with the members of the National Accreditation Board</p>	<p>Viktor Bolotov, Chair of the National Accreditation Board, Academician of the Russian Academy of Education, Deputy Minister of Education of the Russian Federation (1992-2004), Head of the Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science (Rosobrnadzor) (2004-2008)</p> <p>Irina Arzhanova, Executive Director of the National Training Foundation</p> <p>Nelli Rozina, Rector’s Advisor, Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation, Head of the Centre for Review and Updating of Professional and Educational Standards, Council for Professional Qualifications of the Financial Market</p> <p>Galina Maiarovskaia, President of the Association of Russian Music Educational Institutions</p> <p>Elena Bazhenova, Chair of the Council for Education, Russian Non-Governmental Organization “Union of Architects of Russia”</p> <p>Natalia Tiurina, representative of Mass Media and organizations for independent evaluation of education quality, Deputy Head of the Project Office in Education and Social Sphere of the International News Agency "Rossiya Segodnya"</p> <p>Olga Filippova, interpreter</p>

12.00 – 13.00	Lunch (Review Panel only)
13.00 – 13.45	<p>Meeting with representatives from the reviewers' pool (academic experts, representatives of professional community)</p> <p>Innara Guseinova, Doctor of Philology, Associate Professor, Vice-Rector for Research, Moscow State Linguistic University</p> <p>Natalia Smakotina, Doctor of Sociology, Candidate of Philosophy, Professor, Head of the Department of Global Social Processes and Youth Work at the Faculty of Global Processes, Lomonosov Moscow State University</p> <p>Nikolay Prokopov, Doctor of Chemical Sciences, Professor, First Vice-Rector, Professor of the Department of Chemistry and Technology of High-Molecular Compounds, MIREA -Russian Technological University</p> <p>Ekaterina Kameneva, Doctor of Economics, Professor, Vice-Rector for Development of Educational Programmes and International Activities, Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation</p> <p>Rimma Akhmetsafina, Candidate of Engineering, Associate Professor, Head of the Internships and Projects Centre, Deputy Head of the School of Software Engineering, Faculty of Computer Science, National Research University – Higher School of Economics</p> <p>Ivan Vasenev, Doctor of Biological Sciences, Professor, Head of the Department of Ecology, Russian State Agrarian University - Timiriyazev Moscow Agricultural Academy</p> <p>Svetlana Panasenko, Doctor of Economics, Associate Professor of the Department of Marketing, Plekhanov Russian University of Economics</p> <p>Aleksei Chaplygin, Head of the Department of the Educational Ranking, Information Group Interfax</p> <p>Olga Filippova, interpreter</p>
13.45 – 14.30	<p>Meeting with representatives of student community (*Student</p> <p>Oleg Tsapko, Chair of the National Students Union, Chair of the Russian Student Council for Education Quality</p>

	Unions and participants of joint projects and reviews)	<p>Anna Kuznetsova, postgraduate student, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Federal Staff Member of the Russian Students Union</p> <p>Mikhail Gusev, Deputy Chair of the Russian Students Union</p> <p>David Sikharulidze, Deputy Chair of the Russian Students Union</p> <p>Olga Filippova, interpreter</p>
14.30 – 14.45	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel
14.45 – 15.30	Meeting with the representatives (coordinators) of reviewed HEIs	<p>Aleksandr Bazikov, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Gnessins Russian Academy of Music</p> <p>Liliya Alieva, Director of Study Programmes Department, Pushkin State Russian Language Institute</p> <p>Nikolai Tarasevich, Vice-Rector for the Educational and Methodological Affairs, Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory</p> <p>Ekaterina Tsaregorodtseva, Deputy Director, Department of Academic Policies, Far Eastern Federal University</p> <p>Ekaterina Sedykh, Director, Education Quality Management Centre, Minin State Pedagogical University of Nizhny Novgorod</p> <p>Olga Filippova, interpreter</p>
15.30	Departure to Yoshkar-Ola	
23.00	Arrival in Yoshkar-Ola, check in at “Ludoviko Moro” hotel	

March 13, Wednesday

TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
09.00	Arrival at the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA)	
09.00 – 09.15	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel
09.15 – 10.00	Meeting of the Review Panel with NCPA’s Director	Vladimir Navodnov , Director, NCPA Olga Filippova , interpreter
10.00 – 10.45	Welcoming meeting with NCPA staff	Ludmila Popova (Methodology Office) Irina Kirillova (Accounting) Irina Berdinskaya (General Office) Anna Ishutkina (International Office) Andrey Kovyazin (IT) Vladimir Simbiryakov (IT) Maria Odintsova (Accreditation Office) Olga Filippova , interpreter
10.45 – 11.00	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel
11.00 – 11.45	Meeting with the members of the General Meeting of the Founders of NCPA	Ekaterina Shigapova , Chair of the General Meeting of the Founders of NCPA, Director, “Accreditation in Education” Publisher’s Irina Dokuchaeva , Secretary of the General Meeting of the Founders of NCPA, lawyer of the Centre for Training and Consultancy

		<p>Vladislav Pylin, member of the General Meeting of the Founders of NCPA, Deputy Director of the Scientific and Research Institute of Education Quality Monitoring</p> <p>Nadezhda Husainova, member of the General Meeting of the Founders of NCPA, Deputy Director of Scientific and Research Institute of the Education Quality Monitoring</p> <p>Marat Gainutdinov, member of the General Meeting of the Founders of NCPA, Deputy Director, "Accreditation in Education" Publisher's</p> <p>Olga Filippova, interpreter</p>
11.45 – 12.00	Break	
12.00 – 12.45	Meeting with NCPA coordinators and team responsible for SAR	<p>Petr Korotkov, Head, Accreditation Office</p> <p>Oksana Matveeva, Deputy Head, Accreditation Office</p> <p>Daria Koltsova, Manager, Accreditation Office</p> <p>Maria Odintsova, Manager, Accreditation Office</p> <p>Elena Savinykh, Head, Methodology Office</p> <p>Galina Bakumenko, Head, Experts Office</p> <p>Olga Ryzhakova, Manager, Experts Office</p> <p>Vera Chepurnykh, Head, International Relations Office</p> <p>Marina Kurdiumova, Manager, International Relations Office</p> <p>Olga Filippova, interpreter</p>
12.45 – 14.00	Lunch (Review Panel only)	
14.00 – 14.30	Work with documents prepared by NCPA	Review Panel

14.30 – 15.45	Videoconference with HEIs evaluated by NCPA	<p>Irina Kuksa, First Vice-Rector, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University</p> <p>Tatyana Rudenko, Director, Centre for Public Professional and International Accreditation of Educational Programmes, National Research Tomsk State University</p> <p>Ivan Atanov, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Stavropol State Agrarian University</p> <p>Elena Nikonchuk, Director, Department of International Educational Projects, Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University</p> <p>Marina Postnova, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Ulyanovsk State Agrarian University named after P.A. Stolypin</p> <p>Liudmila Filatova, Deputy Director for Academic Affairs, Nizhny Tagil State Social and Pedagogical Institute, branch of Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University</p> <p>Olga Filippova, interpreter</p>
15.45 – 16.00	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel
16.00 – 17.15	Videoconference with foreign experts	<p>Ulrich Hahn, PhD, Professor, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Mathematics, Informatics and Natural Sciences, Institute of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Hamburg University (Germany)</p> <p>Elvyra Acienė, Doctor of Sociological Sciences, Professor, acting Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, Head of the Faculty Council, Deputy Chair of the Senate, Klaipėda University (Lithuania)</p> <p>Ivana Oborná, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Palacký University Olomouc (Czech Republic)</p>

		<p>Ilze Ivanova, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor, Head of the Department of Pedagogics, Faculty of Pedagogics, Psychology and Arts, University of Latvia (Latvia)</p> <p>Eduardas Gabnys, Professor, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (Rector 2005-2011), expert in higher music education (Lithuania)</p> <p>Olga Filippova, interpreter</p>
17.15 – 18.00	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel
19.00	Dinner (Review Panel only)	

March 14, Thursday

TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
09.00	Arrival at the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA)	
09.00 – 09.15	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel
09.15 – 10.15	Videoconference with representatives of foreign agencies (joint projects)	<p>Hening Wang, Higher Education Evaluation Center of the Ministry of Education, P. R. China</p> <p>Jingjing He, Higher Education Evaluation Center of the Ministry of Education, P.R. China</p> <p>Stefan Handke, Managing Director, Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute, ACQUIN (Germany)</p> <p>Anke Rigbers, EVALAG Chairperson (Germany)</p> <p>Olga Filippova, interpreter</p>

10.15 – 11.00	Meeting of the Review Panel with NCPA’s Director	Vladimir Navodnov , Director, NCPA Galina Motova , Deputy Director, NCPA Olga Filippova , interpreter
11.00 – 12.00	Private meeting of the Review Panel: summarizing preliminary results of the visit to NCPA	Review Panel
12.00 – 12.30	Final meeting of the Review Panel with NCPA Staff	Review Panel NCPA staff Olga Filippova , interpreter
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch (Review Panel only)	
14.00	Excursion around the city	
15.00	Departure of Review Panel members	

ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

External review of the National Centre of Public Accreditation (NCPA) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

October 2018

1. Background and Context

National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA) is an autonomous non-profit organization, which was established in 2009 on the initiative of the Guild of Experts in the Sphere of Professional Education. The agency operates independently of the political bodies and the higher education sector.

NCPA is established to be the national quality assurance agency in higher education, with responsibility for public accreditation at the programmatic and institutional levels, assisting in quality enhancement, advising on quality assurance; and serving as liaison with quality assurance agencies worldwide.

NCPA's mission in the Russian system of quality assurance is to form and promote quality culture in higher education through identification, evaluation, and accreditation of the best educational programmes in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

NCPA strives:

- to develop and implement quality standards for programmes of higher education in compliance with ESG;
- to provide multi-faceted engagement of the academic community, employers, and international experts in programme evaluation procedures;
- to ensure public provision of information about the quality of educational programmes delivered by higher education institutions.

NCPA has developed its rules, procedures and criteria for evaluation in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, and has been working within the scope of ESG.

NCPA has been an ENQA member since November 2014 and is applying for renewal of ENQA membership.

NCPA has been registered on EQAR since November 2015 and is applying for renewal of EQAR registration.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This review will evaluate the way in which and to what extent NCPA fulfils the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will

provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether membership of NCPA should be reconfirmed and to EQAR to support NCPA application to the register.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting membership.

2.1 Activities of NCPA within the scope of the ESG

In order for NCPA to re-apply for ENQA membership and for renewal of registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all NCPA activities that are within the scope of the ESG, i.e. reviews, audits, evaluations or accreditation of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to teaching and learning (and their relevant links to research and innovation). This is regardless of whether these activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA, and whether they are obligatory or voluntary.

NCPA performs its functions in compliance with the Statutes and the strategic plan of its development. These documents determine the directions of NCPA's activities. The following activities of NCPA have to be addressed in the external review:

- Accrediting educational programmes in alignment with ESG
- Accrediting institutions of further education
- Accrediting programmes of further education.

3. The Review Process

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in line with the requirements of the *EQAR Procedures for Applications*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-assessment by NCPA including the preparation of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to NCPA;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the ENQA Review Committee;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency, including a voluntary follow-up visit.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts, an academic employed by a higher education institution, student member, and eventually a labour market representative (if requested). One of the members will serve as the chair of the review panel, and another member as a review secretary. For ENQA Agency Reviews at least one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the QA professional[s]). At least one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the student member is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. If requested, the labour market representative may come from the Business Europe nominees or from ENQA. An additional panel member may be included in the panel at the request of the agency under review. In this case an additional fee to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses is applied.

In addition to the four members, the panel will be supported by the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA expectations are met

throughout the process. The ENQA staff member will not be the Secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide NCPA with the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards NCPA review.

3.2 Self-assessment by NCPA, including the preparation of a self-assessment report

NCPA is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-assessment report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a brief description of the national HE and QA system; background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis; each criterion (ESG part II and III) addressed individually. All agency's QA activities (whether within their national jurisdiction or outside of it, and whether obligatory or voluntary) will be described and their compliance with the ESG analysed.
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which NCPA fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG and thus the requirements of ENQA membership.
- The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat who has 4 weeks to pre-scrutinise it before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre-scrutiny is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but whether the necessary information, as stated in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, is present. For the second and subsequent reviews, the agency is expected to enlist the recommendations provided in the previous review and to outline actions taken to meet these recommendations. In case the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to reject the report and ask for a revised version within 4 weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1000 € will be charged to the agency.
- The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of six weeks prior to the site visit.

3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

NCPA will draw up a draft proposal of the schedule for the site visit to be submitted to the review panel at least two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is 2,5 days. The approved schedule shall be given to NCPA at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by NCPA in arriving in Yoshkar-Ola, Russia.

The site visit will close with a final de-briefing meeting outlining the panel's overall impressions but not its judgement on compliance or granting of ENQA membership.

3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ESG. A draft will be first submitted to the ENQA review coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity and language and it will be then submitted to NCPA within 11 weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If NCPA chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by NCPA, finalise the document and submit it to ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

When preparing the report, the review panel should also bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG*, so as to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR.

NCPA is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation applying for membership and the ways in which NCPA expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be discussed along with the final evaluation report.

4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

NCPA will consider the expert panel's report and will publish it on its website once the ENQA Board has made its decision. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. NCPA commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting a follow-up report to the ENQA Board. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website, in addition to the full review report and the Board's decision.

The follow-up report will be complemented by a small-scale visit to the agency performed by two members of the original panel (whenever possible). This visit will be used to discuss issues, based on the ESG, considered as of particular importance or challenge by NCPA. Its purpose is entirely developmental and has no impact on the judgement of membership and/or compliance of the agency with the ESG. Should the agency not wish to take advantage of this opportunity, it may opt out by informing the ENQA Review Coordinator about this.

5. Use of the report

ENQA shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in ENQA.

The review report is used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether NCPA has met the ESG and can be thus admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA. The report will also be used for registration on EQAR, and is designed so as to serve these two purposes. However,

the review report is to be considered final only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to NCPA and ENQA and until it is approved by the Board the report may not be used or relied upon by NCPA, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. NCPA may use the report at its discretion only after the Board has approved of the report. The approval of the report is independent of the decision on membership.

The Chair of the panel shall remain available to respond to questions of clarification or further information from the EQAR Register Committee provided that the ENQA Secretariat is copied in all such requests.

6. Budget

NCPA shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,500 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,500 EUR
Fee of the 2 other panel members	4,000 EUR (2,000 EUR each)
Fee of 2 panel members for follow-up visit	1,000 EUR (500 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	7,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,400 EUR
Approximate travel and subsistence expenses	6,000 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses follow-up visit	1,600 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR VAT excl. for a review team of 4 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, NCPA will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to NCPA if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

The fee of the follow-up visit is included in the overall cost of the review and will not be reimbursed in case the agency does not wish to benefit from it.

In the event of a second site visit required by the Board and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as travel and subsistence costs are recoverable from the agency.

7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

Agreement on terms of reference	Early-October 2018
Appointment of review panel members	November 2018
Self-assessment completed	15 December 2018
Pre-screening of SAR by ENQA coordinator	January 2019
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	February 2019
Briefing of review panel members	March 2019
Review panel site visit	Early-April 2019
Draft of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA coordinator for pre-screening	Early-June 2019
Draft of evaluation report to NCPA	Late-June 2019
Statement of NCPA to review panel if necessary	July 2019
Submission of final report to ENQA	August 2019
Consideration of the report by ENQA Board and response of NCPA	September 2019
Publication of the report	September 2019

ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY

ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	<i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015</i>
EUA	European University Association
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
NAB	National Accreditation Board
NCPA	National Centre for Public Accreditation
QA	quality assurance
Rosobrnadzor	The Federal Service of Supervision in Education and Science
RF	Russian Federation
SAR	self-assessment report
SER	self-evaluation report

ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY NCPA

- Regulations on the National Accreditation Board
- Regulations on the Appeals Procedures and the Appeals Committee
- Internal Quality Assurance System of NCPA
- Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct for NCPA's Staff
- User Manual "Automated Support System of Public Accreditation"
- Survey of Experts and NCPA's Staff (Annex 4, 7)
- Regulations on Public Accreditation
- Regulations on the National Accreditation Board
- Guidelines for External Reviews of Study Programmes
- Guidelines for Self-Evaluation of Study Programmes
- Guidelines for Self-Evaluation of Further Education Programmes
- Guidelines for External Review of Further Education Programmes
- Guidelines for Self-Evaluation of an Institution of Further Professional Education
- Federal Law of the Russian Federation of December 12, 2012 No. 273 "On Education in the Russian Federation"
- Statutes of the National Centre for Public Accreditation (Annex 1)
- Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of 11.04.2017 No. 431 "On Forming and Keeping the List of Organizations Implementing Public Accreditation of the Basic Professional Study Programmes, Basic Programmes of Professional Training and (or) Further Education Programmes"
- Automated Information System for Monitoring of the results of public accreditation of study programmes
- NCPA's cooperation agreements (Annex 5)
- Code of Ethics for Members of the National Accreditation Board
- NCPA's Follow-up Report on the last ENQA review

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY NCPA UPON REQUEST OF THE PANEL

- Statistics on Accreditation decisions (accreditation for full term, reduced term, deny of accreditation);
- Financial plan;
- A list of key performance indicators;
- Criteria for selection of external partners;
- Training of experts – example of Agenda;
- Competence development plan of staff;
- Example of Agreement with Higher Education Institutions on accreditation procedure & example of agreement with HEI for joint accreditation procedure;
- Information on turnover of staff during 2014-2018;
- Sample of a (larger) cluster accreditation: Review panel composition, site visit agenda, final report and decision
- Composition of the General Meeting of the Founders - the list of members;
- Minutes of the last three meetings of the General Meeting of Founders;
- Data on Income-expenditure of the last three years;
- Previous Strategic plan and annual action plans of last three years;
- Sample report for the procedure (for cluster) (full report);
- Example of expert training programme (agenda);

- Example of evaluation report for which the accreditation is denied;
- minutes of Appeals Committee (not delivered as no appeals yet)

OTHER SOURCES USED BY THE REVIEW PANEL

Website of NCPA

Report of the panel of the external review of NCPA (2015)



THIS REPORT presents findings of the ENQA Agency Review of the National Centre of Public Accreditation, undertaken in 2019.



2019 ENQA AGENCY REVIEW